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December 1994
Number 48

FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

The Uncertainly Christian West
Wolfhart Pannenberg

Educating Father Abraham: The Meaning of Fatherhood
Leon R. Kass

Re-Viewing Vatican II
George Lindbeck and George Weigel

Killing Abortionists: A Symposium
Helen M. Alvare / Hadley Arkes / Francis Canavan / Jean Garton
Robert P. George / Nat Hentoff / Richard D. Land / Roger Cardinal Mahony
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Marcia Segelstein • David W. Murray • Wilfred M. McClay
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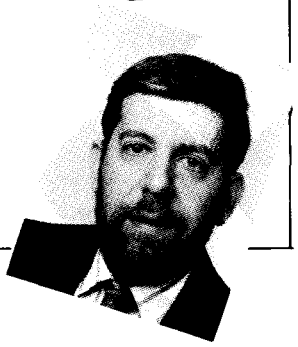

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

DECEMBER 1994 • NUMBER 48

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The Real Story

I read with interest and agreement Edward S. Shapiro's "Blacks and Jews Entangled" (August/September). While there exist shared experiences of oppression, Shapiro notes quite correctly that a black-Jewish relationship should not be based on fanciful notions derived from distorted history. Made-up history will, in the long run, do more harm than good.

Mr. Shapiro uses the example of the PBS documentary film *Liberators,* which falsely claimed that black combat units had liberated the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau. I have followed the *Liberators* story closely. Mr. Shapiro says that the lie of the *Liberators* was exposed in a February 1993 *New Republic* article. This is not the case.

Christopher Ruddy, in the December 1992 issue of the *New York Guardian,* wrote the first comprehensive piece on the *Liberators* lie, quoting, among others, the black soldiers who were depicted in the film. This was followed with an op-ed piece in *Newsday* on December 15, 1992. Shortly after these pieces appeared, a cover story based on Ruddy's work appeared in the *Jewish Voice* of Englewood, New Jersey. *The New Republic* story followed the next month.

I raise this seemingly minor point on the breaking of the story because it further buttresses Mr. Shapiro's description of some people in the Jewish community who were in complete denial of this revision of Holocaust facts. Published reports clearly explaining the lie, which PBS itself later confirmed, were known to many of those who put on the gala event at the Apollo Theatre in December. The film's showing, as well as the appearance of Mayor Dinkins and Jesse Jackson at the Apollo, were heralded as a turning point in black-Jewish relations. None of the organizers of that event wanted to be confused by the facts.

Jews have little to prove to the black community, as Mr. Shapiro so well points out. Blacks, too, who have similarly suffered, need not have liberated a concentration camp to have shown their good will toward Jews. The irony of the *Liberators* is that the true story of the heroic black units and soldiers that helped to liberate all of occupied Europe had already earned the appreciation of Jews: the true story is more powerful than the best fiction.

(Rabbi) Morton H. Pomerantz
Douglaston, NY

The Therapeutic State

Many thanks for David Wagner's article about the family and the therapeutic state ("The Family and the Constitution," August/September). As a volunteer guardian *ad litem* in the court system my husband deals with family vs. state problems every day. We have friends who are actually doing without benefits in order to keep their children out of the clutches of our therapeutic state.

But so far, most of these school programs (breakfast, lunch, and dinner at school, pre-school and/or after-school care) are not compulsory. If parents take their duties seriously the state cannot interfere—yet. However, once a compulsory health care plan run by the government is in place, the therapeutic state will be able to control all children and, through the children, control the parents.

When children are enrolled in their own "health care plan" at birth, regardless of the wishes of the parents, the primary health care provider will probably be a "school health clinic" run by Planned Parenthood. Children will be treated as the therapeutic state wishes them treated and mom and dad will not only have no say in it, they won't even know it—unless the powers that be decide that your child is "at risk" because of you. In that case you will receive a visit from a social worker who, unless you cooperate, will be able to remove your children from your care since you are a threat to their health as defined by the therapeutic state.

"Universal access" may be a two-way street: you have access to whatever health care the government says you have, but the therapeutic state

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has both access and control over you and your children. . . .

Marie Dietz
Center for Pro-Life Studies
North Troy, VT

A Net Liability

In the Public Square section of the August/September issue, Richard John Neuhaus responded to some objections from Father Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus. The proposition that the society, as differentiated from many of its members, has become a "net liability" to the Church is not hard to substantiate. As Father Neuhaus pointed out, it is not his charge, but one made directly and indirectly by Jesuits themselves. . . .

Over ten years ago Professor James Hitchcock documented, from Jesuit publications, the damage that dissenting Jesuits were doing. His little book, *The Pope and the Jesuits*, never made a splash similar to something from Malachi Martin, but the presentation of the actual words and actions of the dissenting Jesuits was devastating. If Father Kolvenbach thinks that the reputation of the Jesuits has been damaged by anything in First Things, I suggest he go over the back issues of Jesuit publications. . . .

Thomas Norton
Dillwyn, VA

Not So Like the Father

In "Like Father, Like Son, Almost" (Public Square, August/September), son Richard Neuhaus informed readers about the public and the "separate" schools of Canada. The "separate" schools were the Roman Catholic schools that were supported by public funds. The church body served by father Clem Neuhaus also had a system of parochial schools in Canada, even as it has in this country, but the Lutheran schools in Canada did not receive any aid from the public treasury. Thus father Clem's Lutheran Church and son Richard's Roman Catholic Church were "almost" the same in Canada in that both had parochial schools, but "almost" has to be very generously defined should it be used to describe the way in which their respective schools were supported. Rome's schools were supported by the provincial treasuries, while Wittenberg's schools were supported by the treasuries of Lutheran citizens of the provinces, who paid their taxes to support the educational endeavors of the provinces and also gave generously to support the educational endeavors of their own congregations.

Son Richard observed that father Clem was called "Pope" Neuhaus. He was called "Pope" not only by his classmates, but also by his colleagues of the Ontario District. But that's as close to Rome as father Clem ever got. "Pope" Neuhaus' physical appearance may have resembled the popes of the Middle Ages, and when "Pope" Neuhaus spoke at a pastoral conference there would be few to rise up in opposition. But he would have been the last to renounce his ordination vow and confessional faith that subscribes to the 1537 "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope," which declares that the doctrines of the papacy are the doctrines of Antichrist. . . .

(The Rev.) Walter Otten
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Brookfield, IL

Title and Author

I am responsible for the title of Professor Andrew Greeley's essays, on which Richard John Neuhaus comments (Public Square, August/September). The Scholars Press book, *The Sociology of Andrew M. Greeley*, published by *South Florida-Rochester-St. Louis Studies on Religion and the Social Order*, of which I am editor in chief, reprints most of Father Greeley's writings on the sociology of religion. We could not present it as "edited by . . . ," since all our staff did was collect and organize the essays. The title accurately portrays the book's contents. Had we omitted "by Andrew M. Greeley," the book would have confused librarians (and others); hence the somewhat anomalous title to which you called attention. Since Father Greeley is widely regarded as the premier sociologist

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Editor-in-Chief

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of religion in our day, collecting and reprinting his massive contribution in the form of articles struck our editors as a most worthwhile project, and we appreciate your calling attention to it.

Jacob Neusner
University of South Florida
Tampa, FL

Abortion or Homosexuality?

In her review essay on James Davison Hunter's newest book, *Before the Shooting Begins* ("Culture Wars, Shooting Wars," June/July), Elizabeth Fox-Genovese states, "[A]bortion is not just one issue among many: it is *the* issue." Her sentiment has been repeated elsewhere. However, while abortion remains a strong second, another issue has replaced it as the primary battlefield of the American culture war—homosexuality.

Three years ago, it probably would have been accurate to speak of abortion as the central issue in American society. A pro-life President stood in opposition to a pro-choice Congress, while the Supreme Court seemed to be inching ever closer to overturning *Roe*. However, two events occurred in 1992 that changed the face of the abortion debate. The first, and most significant, was the Supreme Court's decision in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*. In this decision, a Court composed almost entirely of Reagan-Bush appointees declared, as the *Roe* Court had two decades earlier, that the Constitution guarantees women the right to abort their pregnancies. Second, William Jefferson Clinton was elected President, insuring that the Court's decision would stand for some time, and aligning the legislative and executive branches in the pro-choice camp.

In addition, by the beginning of the 1990s the American public had grown tired of "the abortion issue," for two primary reasons. First, it seems that both sides have exhausted their arguments. Witness the most recent conflict, which has occurred regarding proposed health care legislation. The debate over the inclusion of abortion in health care reform has been basically as follows: One group of Congressmen swears not to vote for any bill that includes abortion. Another group of Congressmen swears not to vote for any bill that excludes it. That's it. No one engages in any type of substantive debate on the issue. Second, Americans have a notoriously short attention span, and abortion simply had been on the front burner too long.

To use Hunter's terminology, the "orthodox" have lost to the "progressives" in the abortion battle, at least for the foreseeable future. A few of the losers have reacted with violence. Most have moved on to the next battle—the place of homosexuality in American society.

As one of the first major policy initiatives of his presidency, Bill Clinton attempted to remove homosexuality as a ground for rejection or dismissal from the U.S. Armed Forces. This launched homosexuality to the front of the public square. The inherent contradictions in the solution that was adopted ("don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue") energized Americans on both sides of the issue to work even harder to insure that they prevail, and homosexuality remains at the top of the American agenda.

Father Neuhaus has expressed the hope that homosexuality is disappearing as a public issue, citing examples such as the failure of gays in New York City to stop the St. Patrick's Day parade and to institute the Rainbow Curriculum in the public schools. However, counterexamples, such as the failure of numerous states to adapt so-called "anti-gay" legislation and the recent success of a Virginia lesbian to regain custody of her child, indicate that the issue is by no means settled. Indeed, it is the mixed results of this part of the culture war—the orthodox win a few battles, the progressive win a few battles—that keeps both sides fighting so hard and keeps the issue squarely in

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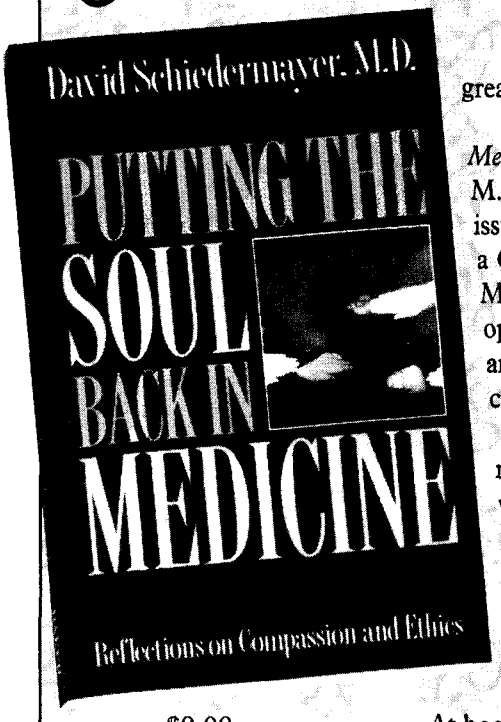

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public focus. (Your own magazine is a testimony to the relevance of this issue; hardly an issue goes by without an extended treatment of homosexuality in some context.)

In the arena of public opinion, the homosexuality debate falls along remarkably similar lines as the abortion debate. A small group is unequivocally opposed to it. A slightly smaller group is unequivocally in favor of it. The majority of the public maintains an inconsistent stance in which they are personally opposed, but don't feel that they have the authority to impose their beliefs on others.

However, in the legal arena (the arena that seems to inevitably become central in our cultural battles these days), the battle lines have been reversed. In the abortion debate, it was the orthodox who had to overcome the legal hurdle of *Roe v. Wade*. In the homosexuality debate, it is the progressives who face the legal hurdle of *Bowers v. Hardwick*, the 1986 case in which a slightly more liberal Supreme Court than our current one explicitly (albeit by the narrowest of margins) denied the existence of a constitutional right to engage in homosexual sodomy.

Having lost (at least for the moment) the abortion battle, the homosexuality battle could be the last stand for the orthodox in our modern culture war. A loss on this issue could easily relegate the orthodox to a vocal minority, slowly phased out of society, until eventually the culture war is redrawn along other lines. However, this battle is quite winnable for the orthodox. Having won the major legal battle already, their task is to do what they have thus far failed to do with abortion—equip the American populace to translate its private revulsion into public policy.

Clifton L. Brinson
Greensboro, NC

Abortion and Capital Punishment

I am continually amazed at those who insist on drawing a parallel between abortion and capital punishment. It is morally obtuse and demonstrates a kind of willful blindness to what would seem to be a rather obvious distinction. Surely one may grasp that there is in fact a clear, moral distinction to be made between, say, Herod and the innocents he slaughtered (Matthew 2:16-17).

Imagine my surprise, then, upon opening the pages of a journal that I have come to count on not to confuse the issues only to find the usually estimable Peter Berger caught in the grips of this particular species of foolishness ("Bipartisan Death Rows," May). The story of Rickie Rector, who left his dessert because he thought he would return from his trip to the execution chamber, was ever so touching, but a distraction from the issue at hand. Would it not perhaps have been just as germane to envision the policeman Rickie Rector killed sitting down to dinner with his family or dandling a baby on his knee? As to Mr. Rector's impairment, it is clear that, at the time of his crime, Rickie Rector felt no qualms about capital punishment when it came to the policeman he murdered, nor did he seem to believe that he should exempt himself from execution. Leaving the moral sensibilities about the question of suicide aside, it could be argued that the state of Arkansas was simply completing the job Rickie Rector began.

Berger does not stop there. He then goes on to posit the absurd notion that capital punishment violates the Constitution and should be eliminated because it is "cruel and unusual." The notion is absurd in that the Fifth Amendment plainly refers *twice* to capital punishment as a given. To be charitable this error does not originate with Mr. Berger, but it is no less egregious for having been concocted by others. . . .

I expect better from First Things. I believe there is an informed discussion that can and perhaps should be held with respect to the moral and ethical issues surrounding capital punishment and Christian faith. But it does no service to that need to conflate the question with abortion. Nor does an attempt to sentimentalize the issue or obfuscate it with specious constitutional reasoning (does Berger perhaps detect some Blackmunite "penumbras" here?) serve this end.

(The Rev.) David F. Crow
Durham, NC

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Brothers at Kittyhawk 1903-1993

— For my brother who flies

December 16

Wind. Relentless coastal blast bending
sea grass to its knees scratching circle
signatures in sand. Wind that sucks
the breath from your lungs, that drills
sand through gaps in flimsy cabin walls,
blows out the fire in your stove, if not
what burns in your belly. You try to sleep,
staring at your brother who stares
at blinking red stars through blue wind.

Wind that can sweep from the sky like a
stricken bird your skeleton of wires, props
and gasoline, can knock you off your feet
but cannot seem to knock a lick of sense
into your head full of dreams. What makes
you think tomorrow your *Flyer* will not merely
glide again, but be the first to climb
the air by its own power, by the sheer
cussedness of its noisy, smelly engine?

December 17

Words lost in engine howl and gusts at
26 knots, they clasp hands, lock eyes,
toss the coin. Wilbur runs, keeps up,
then is left behind, below, Orville's first
flight of 12 seconds. Wilbur's turn adds
20 feet, then Orville 200, and then, before
winter shuts the sky, Wilbur soars 865
feet for nearly a minute in pure air
until the winds force him down till spring.

They taught us to fly, the monument reads,
but ought to say they taught each other.
On Kill Devil Hill dreamwinds still
blow, full circle for ninety years,
the same winds you ride, jet-screaming
across continents like stepping stones.
Brothers breathe on coals, steady hands,
shelter dreams, take turns cheering to keep
each other aloft in the damned wind.

Larry Janowski

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This Time

Some of My Best Friends

James Nuechterlein

Revolutions in consciousness sometimes announce themselves in minor, even trivial, ways.

It was some ten or twelve years ago. My oldest daughter and I were watching a college football game on TV on a Saturday afternoon. Notre Dame was one of the teams, and my daughter, then a teenager, cheered as they scored a touchdown. "Laura," I asked, "You're rooting for Notre Dame?" "They're my favorite team," she said.

It was a revelatory moment. I flashed back in an instant to my own youth, where Notre Dame also played a prominent role, but one entirely different. Then it was the great satan, the Antichrist. Everything hinged on the momentous annual struggle between the Fighting Irish (the dreaded Papists) and the paladins of Protestantism, the Mustangs of Southern Methodist. Notre Dame won most of the time, but there was an occasional Protestant miracle. Now for a Lutheran, Methodists were decidedly chancy. They tended toward enthusiasm, and they were unreliable on the Real Presence. But they were Protestants, as opposed to Catholics, and that was all that really mattered. It meant they believed, as all Protestants did, in justification by faith, in contrast to the Catholic reliance on justification by works. There were, I was vaguely aware, nuances on both sides, but the theological bottom line was clear enough.

In those days, Reformation Day was for Protestants a church festival subordinate in significance only to Christmas and Easter. And when we sang "A Mighty Fortress," we knew precisely who it was who would deprive us of "goods, fame, child, and wife," even as we knew in opposition to whom "the kingdom ours remaineth." For those who needed reminding, there were the tracts in the narthex of the church instructing us as to "Why I am not a Roman Catholic." What we learned at church was reinforced at home. My mother's first question concerning any girl I was dating was, "She isn't a Catholic, is she?"

It took a long time to complicate my worldview. I was utterly stunned when, as a college freshman, I first encountered the view that Lutherans might have more in common with Catholics than with other Protestants. Only over a long time and through a tortuous process did that idea come to make sense to me. But I did gradually become aware not only that Catholics did not depend on justification by works, but that all too many Protestants, in their habit of translating the faith into either the Social Gospel or indiscriminate niceness, had lost any grasp on justification at all. They were "saved"—to the extent the term meant anything—by earnestness of moral purpose. By the time of that conversation with my daughter, I too could root for Notre Dame—even if (in the interests of full disclosure) with only two cheers. I considered myself by then a Lutheran of evangelical catholic persuasion, a position as complicated and tenuous as the term suggests.

The religious world of my youth has been turned upside down. It's no longer Protestants vs. Catholics, but orthodox Christians vs. religious liberals. It's those who can say the creeds without endless mental reservations vs. those for whom the creeds are historical markers but without binding contemporary authority. A while back, a traditionalist Catholic friend told me that he would rather his young son's religious education were in my hands than in those of the liberated nuns who were currently instructing him. The statement was not so much a compliment to me as a comment on the reconstruction of the contours of religious discourse in our time.

A few years ago I participated in an interdenominational consultation on abortion. At that pro-life meeting, the participants ranged from Anabaptists to Orthodox, with virtually all major Christian groups represented. The ground rules were that we would talk not about politics or strategy but would focus instead on the religious resources we could bring to bear in the effort to protect unborn life. What impressed (and surprised) me—and I'm sure the other participants as well—was the sense that for all our theological differences we had fundamentally in common an allegiance to what C. S. Lewis taught us to call "mere Christianity." It became clear to us that we were not simply a gathering of cultural conservatives. We were a gathering of Christian believers united by the imperatives of our common faith in a common cause.

It's a kind of quasi-ecumenism. Ecumenical because it brings together people of different denominations. Lutherans and Catholics (and Methodists and Presbyterians and Whatever) of orthodox persuasion discover that they have more in common with each other than with liberal coreligionists. It's only quasi because nobody is talking about a new church structure. To the extent that the new traditionalism has institutional implications it is in a move of disheartened Protestants to Rome (or, more esoterically, to Orthodoxy). Rome attracts—historical claims aside—because of its strong ecclesiology, the lack of which many identify as Protestantism's Achilles' heel;

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Orthodoxy attracts because in avoiding the Enlightenment it avoided the capitulation to modernity that did in much of Protestantism. For those traditionalist Protestants for whom Catholicism and Orthodoxy are not, or at least not yet, acceptable choices—well, we indulge in (mostly) improbable hopes for reform within our various churches, meanwhile finding refuge in local parishes (blessedly, many of them remain) that still worship and believe according to the precepts of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic faith.

Perhaps precisely because it is unofficial and noninstitutional, this new ecumenical spirit avoids ecumenism's perennial temptation: settling for the least common denominator. This ecumenism is restorationist, and its common denominator—nothing "least" about it—is credal seriousness. It is unlikely to appeal to either cafeteria Catholics or lukewarm Protestants.

The new ecumenical paradigm is not, to be sure, everywhere in place. The widespread support for the declaration on "Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (FT, May) indicates the degree to which the old Protestant vs. Catholic division has been superseded; the (also) widespread opposition to the statement suggests that not all minds have been changed. There are still Protestants who define themselves through anti-Catholicism, even as there are Catholics who cannot understand why Holy Mother Church should concern herself with schismatics.

But the initiative is clearly with the ecumenical traditionalists. We will not likely find frequent opportunity to commune together across denominational lines—a genuine sadness. Yet we will almost certainly find regular occasions for making common cultural and religious arguments in public. Meanwhile, we will encourage and console and sustain one another. Even if we can't all bring ourselves to join in the Notre Dame fight song. FT

Transfusion

As the preacher beyond the curtain moans "Amen"
Over a sister with gall or kidney stones,
You watch the first maroon's slow seeping down

To meet the vein beneath your collarbone
And turn your thoughts to the shouting man next door
Who told you once in a confidential tone,

While smoothing tinfoil on the hallway floor
To plate the limbs of saran-wrap warrior dolls
He makes, how he jumped from a window years before

Enraged—the second story—and in the fall
Shattered all the bones below his knees,
And how doctors caged his legs in metal rods

For months until they healed. Remembering this
You trundle your I.V. pole down the corridor
And think of the Civil War series on PBS

You watch almost every night. You imagine there—
Inside a medical tent at the edge of a wood
With some young soldier's swollen leg laid bare

Beneath the clamp and saw—a surgeon's aid
Who's lost count of the limbs he's amputated
And of the men who died before he could;

Who drinks himself to sleep and dreams of God
In Heaven flensing back the gangrened flesh
To plant new tender, star-shaped seeds of blood

That quiver with the pulsing of his breath
And hesitate before they burst to blossom
Muscle fibers in the gap, to mesh

One tendon with another, the body's form
uncurling like another, larger seed;
Who dreams his own unfolding in the warm

Perfected light. But here and now instead,
Before the tinted window where you find
The trees have turned already a deepened red

You stand as if to memorize the sky,
To learn the horizon, its long grey line.

Jeanene Skillen

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Opinion

Mom and the Gurus of Guiltlessness

Marcia Segelstein

Shortly after the birth of her daughter, talk show host Kathie Lee Gifford joked with David Letterman about her decision to stop breast-feeding then-six-week-old Cassidy. Her joke went something like this. The dresses Kathie Lee would be wearing to co-host the upcoming Miss America pageant had arrived at her home. But, alas, they didn't fit because her breasts were enlarged. What a choice she faced. There was Cassidy looking up at her crying, "Mama," and there were the dresses with the too-tight bustlines. The dresses won. Laughter.

Then there's this item from the "Editor's Note" in an issue of *Redbook* featuring an interview with Hillary Clinton. "It's not easy to get a date with the First Lady. And when you finally get the call . . . you drop everything and run. For our writer . . . dropping everything included her newborn son—and she was still nursing."

And a recent *Ladies' Home Journal* included the "Ten Commandments for Working Moms." This is number nine: "Remind yourself over and over again that you would not feel any less guilty if you did not work. Maternal guilt is cosmic. It comes with the territory, striking *no matter what you do or where you do it"* (emphasis added).

Do your own thing. Realize your potential. I'm OK, you're OK, and whatever we do is OK. Those are words many of my generation seem to live by. Which would be OK except for the generation we're raising. Or not raising.

I realize I'm going out on a limb here, but I believe that parents are uniquely qualified to raise their own children, and, whenever possible, should. That's right: I used the "s" word.

And here's another one. Selfishness. Pick up any parenting magazine and you'll find out how to pump your breasts at work without feeling guilty that you're not the one at home doing the actual feeding. Or how to find someone to raise your children while you're busy hosting beauty pageants. In our culture, women in particular are preached a message of me-firstism. We're only supposed to do what we feel like doing, when we feel like doing it.

How could I be so politically incorrect as to suggest that Mommy or Daddy stay home with the kids? It has to do with a unique qualification parents have. In fact, it's something my generation practically claims to have invented. It's called love. Who do we think is loving our children while we're sitting in our offices or on airplanes? Babysitters may be affectionate, gentle, and kind. But I'm talking about love. The kind parents feel for their children. The kind that reassures with every smile. The kind that runs deep. The kind, as the song says, that you can't buy. (Think of it this way: If you fired your sitter tomorrow, she'd cope with the prospect of never seeing your children again. Would you?)

Don't misunderstand. I'm not talking about families in which both parents have to work to put food on the table and pay the mortgage. I'm not talking about parents whose hearts break every morning as they leave their children and head off to work.

I'm talking about situations in which it's not a matter of survival but of fulfillment. I may be talking about a minority here, but in my personal experience, they're the vast majority. And it appears to me that what many do out of necessity, more and more are freely choosing.

A lot of people claim to be sick of the "mommy wars," as the media have dubbed discussions like this one. They argue that women should be allowed to get on with their lives whichever route they choose. But that's just it. Women *are* allowed to get on with their lives and choose to work or stay home. Nobody is suggesting that the choice be restricted. What I am suggesting is that it be questioned. This debate should go on, because it involves an issue that goes to the heart of society. Society has a stake in its children. And maybe it's time society started making some value judgments.

We're told that the answer to inner city crime, drug use, gangs, high school dropouts, and a host of other ills lies in strong, involved parents. But heaven forbid suggesting to any self-respecting, educated, upwardly mobile young professional, particularly of the female variety, that she take a career break for the sake of the children.

Part of the problem is that we've come to define ourselves by our job titles and our paychecks. We can't imagine life without a pat on the back from our boss or the adulation of our fans. We have no identity outside the workplace, or at least no identity that counts.

Television personality Linda Ellerbee had some thoughts about all this in an article she wrote for *McCall's* magazine. "My son and daughter are now

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twenty-two and twenty-three years old," she said, "but I wish I could go back to when they were children and work less. I know this may make me sound antifeminist, and I'm not, but I think I could have struck a better balance in my life. . . . My daughter ran away from home when she was a teenager, and that was a pretty big sign that something was wrong in our house. I tried to scale back my work hours then, but she was almost fully grown. It was too late. I should have learned this lesson much earlier."

Don't expect to hear such words of wisdom from "experts." Those gurus of guiltlessness will tell you anything you want to hear. Leon Hoffman, M.D., Director of the Parent Child Center of the New York Psychoanalytic Society, wrote in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal* that (some) "moms are 'better' moms because they do work full-time." Dr. Hoffman says that normative behavior in cultures is constantly being redefined. He writes, "Should a child be nursed by the mother or by a wet nurse? We find that question preposterous, but it was debated during the Renaissance."

In this century, it's been debated whether breast milk or formula is best for babies. For the moment, the debate has been settled. Breast milk wins. So now new mothers go out of their way to be sure their babies get breast milk. They bring their pumps to work. They take over closets at lunchtime to express the precious liquid. Can they really believe that the milk is more important than they are? Mother love has never been found in a bottle. It needs to be expressed in person.

I believe people will look back on the last couple of decades of the twentieth century and find it astonishing that "experts" could possibly have argued that it makes no difference who does the primary "caregiving" for a child—a parent or a paid employee.

One last item. A recent contestant on "Jeopardy!" was introduced as "a member of the counterculture of the nineties: a stay-at-home mom." Maybe that's what's needed: a new counterculture. But unlike the last one, let's base this one on loving others, not just ourselves. Let's start with our children.

MARCIA SEGELSTEIN *covered family issues as a producer for "CBS This Morning" until the birth of her daughter.*

Coming in January . . .

Carl F. H. Henry on the Natural Law Debate

Avery Dulles on the Catholic Catechism

Babies and Body Parts

Paul C. Fox

Not so many years ago death was a simple enough concept. If a person's heart ceased to beat for any great length of time he was dead, and that was that. Then along came medical technology, and suddenly what had been simple became complicated. Now a person's heart can be stopped completely for hours, and yet, thanks to the heart-lung machine, that person's brain will survive undamaged. The person is dead by the old definition, yet obviously not really dead. On the other hand—again thanks to medical technology—a person's brain can be irreparably destroyed, even though the heart may be kept beating for many hours. The person is still alive by the old definition, yet most of us instinctively feel that he is somehow not really living.

The altered perception of what constitutes life and death underlies the ethical dilemmas surrounding organ transplantation today. Of course, there is no controversy if, for example, a living person voluntarily donates a kidney to a relative who needs one. No one has to die in order for the transplant to be performed. This is not the case, however, with transplantations of such vital organs as the heart, the lungs, and the liver, where the donor must necessarily be dead before the transplantation can take place. Yet since, even with the best available medical technology, the organs deteriorate fairly rapidly, they must be "harvested" (in the macabre terminology of transplantation) when the donor is—you'll pardon the expression—"freshly dead." In other words, there is a considerable urgency about removing the donor's organs as soon as possible after his death. At the same time, there is also an overwhelming need to prevent "premature removal," i.e., removing the vital organs of a person who is not yet dead.

To deal with these problems, the medical community has developed strict criteria for defining what is called "brain death." These criteria are extremely detailed and, until now, very much biased toward presuming that life continues: there is virtually no possibility that a person who is actually still living will be proclaimed dead. For example, someone who has been comatose for years, and whose responsiveness is limited to a few primitive reflexes, will still not qualify as "brain dead" by these criteria. Neither will an anencephalic baby, that is, a baby born with no cerebral cortex but with enough brain matter to permit primitive reflexes. And that brings us to the latest development in the ethics of transplantation.

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Consider the following. Of all the children whose lives could be saved by an organ transplant, half die because of a shortage of donated organs. On the other hand, anencephalic babies, who are born with almost no brain but are otherwise physically normal, can only survive a few days after birth. On the surface, it seems like an almost perfect match: the organs of a baby who cannot live can be used to rescue another child who must otherwise die. That, at least, is how it looked to physicians at Loma Linda University in 1987, when they set up a special program designed to salvage the organs of anencephalic babies for transplantation. However, in eight months of operation the program failed to salvage even one viable organ. Why? Simply because these babies were not "brain dead" at birth: impaired as they were, they retained enough brain function to fail the criteria for death. By the time these babies finally did die, their organs had suffered severe damage and were no longer usable.

The physicians and nurses at Loma Linda accepted their defeat, some of them with considerable relief. An anencephalic baby is still a *baby* after all, and the act of inflicting intensive care on a dying infant simply in order to be able to harvest its organs after death began to take an emotional toll on the staff.

There are some, however, who are not so willing to relinquish this potential source of donor organs. In 1992 the Florida State Supreme Court heard the "Baby Theresa" case. In this case the parents, backed by the ACLU, requested that their anencephalic baby be declared dead at birth, even though she did not meet the accepted criteria for brain death, so that her heart could be transplanted into another child. One can only guess what the parents' motives and feelings were. Perhaps they were trying to assuage guilt feelings or offer themselves comfort by trying to bring some good out of a tragic situation. Perhaps they were able, by some exercise of self-hypnosis, to avoid realizing what would actually be done to their baby: that she would be taken to an operating room, and there—even though she was able to breathe, kick, and cry—her heart would be removed for use as a "donor organ."

The reasoning of the ACLU in this case was chilling. They noted "the inconsistency of permitting the termination of pregnancies up to the moment of birth" while at the same time "prohibiting the donation of organs just after birth." As they put it, "There is absolutely no morally significant change in the fetus between the moments immediately preceding and following birth." Note that exactly the same argument used by the pro-life movement for years in defending the unborn is now being used by the ACLU to justify infanticide.

It is not hard to see where this reasoning leads. Though the ACLU denies that its position "serves as a springboard to institutional murder," it clearly does just that. The reasoning used to justify declaring anencephalic babies "dead" at birth can be applied with equal logic to any other baby whose deformities might have moved its parents to abort it, had they but known of them. In fact, this reasoning really strips all newborns of any protection. If abortion on demand "up to the very moment of birth" is morally acceptable, as the ACLU asserts, why not infanticide on demand? And why stop at infants? There are millions of retarded children and adults whose lives are below the high standards of the social engineers. Why not declare them dead as well? At a stroke, the organ shortage could be solved.

Fortunately, the Florida Supreme Court had the uncommon (these days) good sense to reject the ACLU's arguments. Baby Theresa was allowed to live out her short life without being terminated for some "higher good." But it was too much to hope that the notion of harvesting organs from handicapped infants would die with her.

Last summer, no less an authority than the AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs declared that it is "ethically permissible" for anencephalic infants to be used as donors while still alive. In its opinion, the Council admitted that it is normally preferable for an organ donor to be dead before removing vital organs, but made an exception in the case of anencephalics for two main reasons: first, "because of the great need for children's organs," and second, because anencephalics "have never experienced, and will never experience, consciousness." Or, as one supporter of the decision bluntly put it, "The quality of life for this child is so low it would be ethically justifiable to sacrifice its life by a few days to save the life of another person."

Such reasoning cannot be confined to the narrow case of anencephalics. Due to improvements in prenatal care the incidence of anencephaly has declined steadily, so that fewer than one hundred babies with anencephaly are likely to be born in the United States each year, and many of them are born with such serious organ defects that they would be excluded as organ donors. Clearly, anencephalics alone would not begin to address the "great need for children's organs" that the Council cited in justifying its decision.

The Council's decision must be seen for what it is—the thin edge of the wedge. Using the dual arguments of "no possibility of consciousness" and "poor quality of life," it will not be difficult to extend the Council's reasoning widely. What about children and adults in a "persistent vegetative state"? If in the judgment of the medical experts such people no longer have the possibility of consciousness, what ethical obstacle remains to removing their vital organs? What about the profoundly retarded who, as all compassionate social planners will agree, have a "low quality of life"? What about a child with third-degree burns over 90 percent of his body? He has no

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chance of survival, and an obviously low quality of life, yet his heart is beating strongly—a heart that another child could use. Why not end the needless suffering of one child, and give the gift of life to another through one painless and humane operation?

Unthinkable? Think again. Think first of everything that was unthinkable thirty years ago and is now commonplace: abortion on demand, the growing acceptance of euthanasia, genetic engineering, cloning, and so on. Think of the unthinkable Holocaust. The ideas behind that horror originated not with the Nazis but with the "humane" social scientists of Germany's finest universities. Then think of the combined resources of the AMA and the ACLU turned against the Baby Theresas of our society. We must anticipate the unthinkable, or the unthinkable will become routine.

PAUL C. FOX, *a member of the Hutterian Brethren, is a medical doctor in Farmington, Pennsylvania.*

Fleeing Nature: The Wild God on Campus

David W. Murray

Not content with the shuttle
And the woman's loom, I have come to greater things,
To slay a beast by hand. . . .
— Agave,
The Bacchae of Euripides

The above lines, horribly ironic, reveal an ancient mischief of Satyrs, the goat-footed attendants of Dionysus. We can read of their doings in several plays of the early Greeks, much concerned with the nature of male and female.

In particular, it is in Euripides that we confront two cases of women un-natured, though the pathways for each are different. By "un-natured" I mean the need for a figure to either transcend or violate his biological fate. We can see this need in the figure of Medea.

Diana Rigg has recently played the role on Broadway, leading the *New York Times'* critic, Bernard Holland, to a contemporary political message. He suggests that Medea as feminist should discomfit men. This reading might surprise past scholars who have seen in Euripides a misogynist. Holland nevertheless spies gentlemen in the audience, confronted with a murderous female, who have difficulty swallowing, and in the hearts of the ladies a gloating, and a warning.

The play does, it is true, speak to the politics of gender, but there is something rather different in the horror of the killing she commits. Nor should we take the case of Medea alone: two Euripidean women lead to the same conclusions—about nature, motherhood, and the politics of aborting.

The problem of the play *Medea*, though awful, is straightforward: a barbarian woman's honor is lost through her husband's disloyalty, and he must be punished. Terribly, as it turns out, for Medea chooses as her instrument of revenge disloyalty to her own nature as a woman, and strikes where the pain will be greatest. In this tragic play, she who has already caused the death of her brother for love now kills directly: the seared new bride and her own stabbed children, whom she will not leave to a life of dishonor. Medea knows full well what it is that she does.

Indeed, she is most fully in possession of herself when she undertakes the act. Thus it is that the chorus intones, "Honor is coming to the race of women." She masters her womanliness to prove her honor, and upon the pyre of her children and her rival dance the flames of her revenge. Mastering her nature in the service of what was, by her calculus, a higher virtue, Medea acts for all women faced with horrible exigencies.

Something different—less the calculus of a barbarian but in a way more frightful—happens between mother and child in Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Blinded by religious ecstasy, Agave and the Maenads brutally attack Agave's young son, Pentheus. They think him a beast, and by that error carry out the revenge of slighted Dionysus, whose rites have been offended.

Agave in her madness enacts the will of the angered god when she tears her own child into scattered flesh. Like Medea, Agave violates the most fundamental commandment of her nature. But unlike Medea, Agave does so without true knowledge of her act.

"Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad" is an elemental adage of the Greek world. So the first step in the revenge of Dionysus upon those who have offended is to cloud the minds of the Bacchant women. This he does in order that they will accomplish the monstrous as though it were the triumphant.

Why the gods do such things is hard to answer, but how Dionysus accomplishes his end contains a terrible moral. When Agave, as priestess of the kill, falls upon him, young Pentheus touches her cheek as he cries, "Pity me, mother, don't murder me, your son." Nevertheless, possessed, her gaze deranged, Agave seizes his forearm, braces her foot against his ribs,

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and rips out the shoulder with the furious strength of the god. Then the other Bacchants attack doomed Pentheus, as the saddened chorus sings:

> While he groaned his final breath,
> They screamed triumphant. This one an arm,
> Another a booted foot tore free.
> His ribs were raked bare by the white
> Blades of their fingers; each bloodied her hands
> At play with the flesh of Pentheus.

Foam-flecked Agave does not understand her own act, and believes that she has slain a young lion. To the chorus she demands, "Do you praise me?" Approaching her father, Agave cries out for honor: "Above all others, greatest daughter, by far am I." She extends to him the head of Pentheus.

Gazing at the sky, as her madness clears, recalled to herself, Agave finally sees the truth. She looks to the burden in her grasp, and in horror comes her realization: "Poor me! I see the greatest sorrow in the world. . . . No! No! But pitiful! I hold the head of Pentheus my child, who is no more."

For the Greeks, Dionysus, who will not be mocked, represents our wild natures, undomesticated—*sauvage*, as the French say. Often in the plays our natures and our fates are revealed to us as mightier than the feeble power of our efforts to reform them. They are more than recalcitrant to our re-conditioning efforts; they devastate them. In *The Bacchae*, the god's wildness is unleashed as revenge upon our overweening pride, which had sought, by penetrating rites, not only to learn the secrets of our natures, but to thwart them by our manipulation.

By our own hands do we slay ourselves, Euripides seems to tell us, when our minds are foiled and we fail to see, in a true light, the world, our fates, and our natures. Pentheus transgressed the female mysteries, while Agave, who claimed the public honor of female hunter, reaped only the destruction of her womb's fruit. Confronting the wild nature of Dionysus, our cultural constructs of gender, artifactual and arid, clank mechanically towards their disastrous end. They are no match.

Thus we come to the politics of nature, particularly with respect to gender, the focus of many proclamations. On campuses today, the dominant orthodoxy is ranged, as it were, against Dionysus. It proclaims that we have no essential nature, neither as mothers and sons, nor as male and female. Women in particular are constructed in a manner disadvantaged, it is said, and should be re-conditioned, made to suit for a life of public questing and the honor of the hunt.

Even Lady Macbeth need not have called to the gods to "unsex" her, say many feminists. There was no need to undo her biology in order to commit murder, for such an illusion as that of an inner nature could not in the first place have shaped her fate. As biology is an invention, she need only, to escape its confines, get a better grip on feminist theory and submit to doctrinaire courses. Bush is bear, they insist in the classrooms of today, and bear, bush. A sea change indeed; culture is all-powerful, and biology is reduced to its ideological mask.

Thus "nature" recedes from view in the activist classroom as a fact of human experience, and reemerges as no more than a fraudulent veil spread over the iron fist of patriarchal power. Seeking hegemonic dominance, we are told, the complicit sciences have suffused the world with calculating ideology, and pretended to discover as its laws of motion what are only their own base graspings. "Sex" and "mother" are but words that are no more than deceitful air. Since culture pipes the human tune, the revolutionary task is to seize it withall, and bend it to our bidding.

But who, we must ask, shall culture these culturalists, they who imagine that Dionysus no longer lurks? What is this new power, which makes worlds out of policed speech? Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, remember, drowned his books of magic; who is this that scuttles Enlightenment texts?

A dominant conceit in critical theory courses is the image of contingency, of culture and experience as constructed out of whole cloth, the cloth itself but gossamer talk. Ludic language, the absence of final grounding, and inverting the conventional proscenium constitute the philosophical framework of what becomes no less than a theater of experience. Ontology, the conceit holds, is no more than drama or game, the lines but learnt speeches, the scenery cardboard cobbled of the oppressor's dreams. The revolutionary may devise a new mask and hawk it; if stridently asserted, this illusion might well replace the others.

These conclusions, however, in the thought of others, suggest exactly the dangerous "little learning" of which folklore warns us. For cautious skeptics, perhaps the "rack" of nature and being dissolves, as it were, less readily.

But for the fashionable, the academic community has entered a world not only postmodern, but under the sway of the deconstructive Inquisitor. Under this aspect, all of our experience is regarded as game-like, subject to rules that are arbitrary and constructed only by power. "Power" alone remains the one privileged transcendent spared corrosive doubt.

Moreover, the rules themselves, no longer "essentialist," are seen as capable of reversal, so that the marginal can be transposed with the central, the normal with the deviant, the just inverted into the unjust, the real into the imagined, and the "natural" into whatever we can get away with. Not only "can be": the rules must be transformed.

And what if not all "agree" on the game we are

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playing? Here many observers blanch, for in the campus "culture wars" the increasingly prevalent answer to this question derives from Nietzschean will, whose parody is, "We have ways of dealing with people like you." Once this world is entered, its advocates very literally try to display their power over other visions, principally by insisting that foul is fair, and fair is foul. If this inversion can conquer others, then the case for arbitrariness is made.

For the political activist, others must be brought to accept the contingent, constructed nature of our experience, and the power of this vision must be tested against our deepest convictions and firmest groundings. Are we asked to accept propositions that seem counterintuitive, even manifestly absurd? This should not be seen as a failing. The line attributed to Tertullian may be heard: "I believe *because* it is absurd."

Thus the more outrageous the inversion, the more implausible and against common experience the unmasked revelation, the more diaphanous and null the Emperor's gown, the greater is the triumph of those activists who can win its acceptance. And the more grows their power, sometimes imposed from without, more often internalized as self-censure. Recall the judgment, in Hans Christian Andersen's story, that fell on those who would not celebrate the Emperor's magnificent train: that they were unworthy of the post that they held. Few academics, so susceptible to flinching anxiety in the face of raw power, can face that devastating charge.

That is why the "correctness" of phrases or judgments must constantly be changed by the most aggressive of the campus Jacobins, so as to instill a constant insecurity, and a fugitive quality to that which we think we know. "Security" can then come only by checking first with those in power. One must learn what is the code for the day; who is in, and who out, and whom to trample sacrificially as an enemy of the people.

Political correctness, it now appears, is predictable. It will surface in its most adamant form wherever the contradictions of our natural experience are most insistent. There we must be made to bow; the more ludicrous the object or proposition to which we bend our knee, the greater is the power of the ringmaster, this Prospero who does not love us.

And the greatest ringmaster must subdue the wildest beast. That beast is any whose "naturalness" and claim upon our given humanity would make of it, of all reversals, the most binding. This helps to explain the position of what may be seen as the most "correct" and unchallenged population on campus, namely, the forces of abortion. So thoroughly is their gaze fixated on this single target that pressure groups will demand the acceptance or rejection of judges and politicians based solely upon their abortion posture.

So overarching is the principle in the mind of ideologues that some feminists lament the fate of East Germans since the Wall's collapse. They reason that women of the former police state have lost their "reproductive freedom" under the West's rule. These feminists call, as it were, for totalitarian prisoners to return to their concrete cell, trading liberty of the spirit for a state-funded procedure.

Abortion is disfiguring the American political and cultural landscape. Congress now federalizes and prohibits clinic protest. One court injunction, for instance, forbade protesters from holding enlarged photographs of a human fetus *in utero*. These are restricted from the view of clinic patrons, one must think, lest they touch the cheek.

There can be no acceptance of protest violence; it violates law. But regardless of whether one opposes or supports abortion on substance, all should see that the extremity of the process is now exacting a prohibitive cost on civil liberties and legal soundness.

Abortion politics is a religious fight, but it is also deeply more than a religious fight. It is a question concerning the core of Western culture and its relationship to human life. Even were ecclesiastical issues absent, this argument must be joined by any who claim our cultural inheritance.

At best, the abstract debate shows the triumph of philosophical pragmatism over essentialism. The definition of the fetus as child or as tissue no longer rests on inherent traits, but alters with the mother's desires or interest. The shifty reach of "wanting"—now making, now unmaking personhood—does work that rivals, in dark parody, the doctrine of transubstantiation.

At worst, the debate is no debate at all, but opposition strangled silent. On campuses, the strongest grip on speech, the most thorough denial of opposition, occurs with respect to this issue. One voice only is given legitimate status, the pro-abortion stance of feminist doctrine. The feminists either assume or produce total unanimity, and command campus departments, funding, and facilities for their political agenda, brooking no opposition.

The intensity of this fight, and the taboo against its honest debate or examination, both arise, I believe, because it is here that the most "magic" of cultural construction must be worked.

How complete is the victory? A widespread accompaniment to the politicized scene is the presence of remarkable "double standards" for offense and assault. Asymmetries of gender, race, or theme are familiar to any campus figure who stands outside the orthodoxy. Some figures and ideas are prejudged and found perpetually wanting, while others enjoy invisibility before the policing eye, apparently enlightened by foreordained grace.

The stories are by now well known. To call a religious believer a "patriarchal bigot" or a conservative

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skeptic a "Nazi homophobe" is not a campus crime, but instead a positive mark of political breeding. To say that females have an "essential nature" established by biology is a hateful oppression, unless and until the exact motion is required in a positive way to advance the women's agenda. Well-meaning commentators point out these confusing contradictions as though they were inadequacies of the crusade, rather than its most forceful conquest.

To the "corrected" mind, rats have rights, and babies do not. This was the actual content of political signs placed together recently on campus. Such thoughts are literally adjacent not only on bumper stickers, but in classroom doctrine. What should be grasped is that this adjacency is not done *in spite* of the eerie fact that it reveals a double standard of judgment, but, I fear, precisely *because* of the double standard. It becomes necessary for both of two contradictory propositions to be accepted simultaneously, in order to demonstrate the voltage of the cultural power. All revolutionary adherents are called to prove their zeal by the deepest sacrifice. The Maoist child must denounce its parents. The gang initiate must kill a sister. The witch must eat her fetus; the more of them consumed, the more pure the devotion.

It has always been possible for any movement to convert someone by the exercise of coercion, but to convert them back at will requires strong reins. If, through a double standard, they can be turned now on, then off, like a faucet, the control is then complete.

Medea stands for a woman trapped, and taking steps which, though horrible, are driven by her necessity. Agave's crime follows from divine delusion. She imagines herself to be doing one thing, but offended Dionysus cruelly turns her hand. The taking of fetal life in America today sometimes fits either of these patterns; desperate women with only Hobson's choice. I can see no ground to judge those acts.

But there is another creature on the political landscape, I now suspect, caught only by denial, and that self-inflicted. Deliberately, with either the goal of liberation or the desire to escape the consequences of a freedom carelessly taken, this person offers up life itself to a harsh master, and insists that the act is correct.

American culture has succumbed to a strange vision. Even the skin-flaying Aztecs with their hundred-thousand gnawed skulls served no more savage god than the one who calls that command. What else could explain the increasing fury with which abortion advocates deny all debate, forbid all doubt, and muster their Bacchic troops?

Is it not their fear that if the frenzy fails and their gaze clears, they will see themselves truly? Were it true that things have a reality beyond what we insistently name them to be, who could face the awful questions that arise next? What dark obsidian knife is this, and whose these pitiful limbs? Is not the ferocious commitment of the hardest activists really born of fear of their own god, that he has deceived them? What more striking prize, what more ghastly, powerful, and binding act of worship could there be, than to convince women that ripping unnecessarily the fruit of natural life from their own wombs brings them honor?

"Now the House of Justice has collapsed," says another Greek dramatist, Aeschylus, writing of Orestes' crime. Orestes committed the terrible act of matricide. But it is the self-same knife he wielded as did Agave, that kills motherhood.

Aeschylus writes, perhaps, of our own future, after we have entered fully this world where political will sets nature and truth on its rough judgment stand, and our own generation begins to reap a savage reciprocity:

> Should this be, every man will find a way
> to act his own caprice;
> over and over again in time
> to come, parents shall await
> the deathstroke at their children's hands.

How the fairest has become the most foul, and somewhere goat-feet dance.

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On The Other Hand

Reflections on the President's Underwear

Peter L. Berger

The Continuum Publishing Company has just brought out an English translation of a book by Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Laughter: A Theological Essay* (more or less simultaneously it seems, with the German original, a Herder publication). Kuschel teaches ecumenical theology and theological ethics at Tuebingen, and he is coauthor with Hans Küng of the declaration on so-called "global ethics" issued by the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago last

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year. That event could not possibly be discussed other than laughingly, and the Küng-Kuschel ethical manifesto, which tried to articulate some sort of lowest common denominator of religiously based moralities, would also present a formidable challenge to even the most accomplished satirist.

Despite these unpromising credentials, Kuschel has written a moderately useful book. He spends too much time on the ethical question (which had already bothered Plato) as to when laughter is or is not permissible, and he is overly fascinated by Umberto Eco's much overrated novel, *The Name of the Rose*, which revolves around Aristotle's lost book on comedy. Still, Kuschel makes two important points: that Christian theology has paid far too little attention to the comic as a dimension of reality; and that there ought to be something like a theology of laughter.

Kuschel does not pretend to supply this missing subdiscipline, and far be it from me to make such an attempt here. I have argued elsewhere that the comic is a signal of transcendence, because it suggests, even if only in fugitive moments, that tragedy is not the final word about the human condition. If religious faith is valid, then this suggestion is indeed true, in which case the comic discloses much more fundamental aspects of reality than the tragic. Put differently, in the perspective of faith it is comedy rather than tragedy that is finally profound. Put differently again, the phrase "redeeming laughter" says much more than it seems to do. Nietzsche once remarked that he would find Christianity more credible if Christians looked more redeemed. The scarcity of redeeming laughter, I daresay, has much to do with this unconvincing appearance.

Although Kuschel briefly discusses Freud's ideas about humor, there is very little reference in the book to sex. Yet any reflection about the comic, theological or otherwise, must come to terms with the fact that a very large amount of humor has always revolved around sexual situations. From Homer to Aristophanes, from the most primitive pranksters to the most sophisticated comedians, there has been a perduring insight: *Sex is funny*. This insight is correct, indeed profoundly correct.

Why is sex funny? On the level of everyday human life, it is funny because it debunks the pretensions of those who deem themselves, or are deemed by others, to be important people. At the same time, this debunking exercise humanizes those who are thus shown up. During the Congress of Vienna, Metternich, the great statesman and architect of the post-Napoleonic order of Europe, fell desperately in love with the wife of one of the ambassadors at the conference. He would dash out of the most important negotiations to send the lady passionate *billets-doux*, to arrange meetings via dubious go-betweens, and to dash off to rendezvous in improbable places. Not surprisingly, with all this amorous activity, he frequently fell asleep during crucial diplomatic sessions.

But sex is also funny for a deeper (if you will, a metaphysical) reason: More than anything else, sex shows up the fundamental human dilemma of being caught between spirit and matter, between the aspiration toward the infinite and the captivity in finitude. Sex is the most pervasive link between the most sublime and the grossest human experiences. It is not only, in the words of Augustine, that we are born *inter faeces et urinam*, but that the same crass location has also given birth to every kind of lyrical emotion. This fact is heavy with anthropological significance; needless to say, it can be, and often enough has been, reflected upon without a trace of humor. I would argue that an understanding of the comic aspect of the matter is essential to a philosophical and indeed a theological anthropology.

During the last few years, virtually every major religious body in America has appointed commissions, study groups, and task forces to issue ponderous statements on sexuality. As was to be expected, these have become battlegrounds between the contending forces in the ongoing culture war. I have no intention of going here into the substance of these debates (if only because, I regret to say, my views on some of the points at contention do not easily fit into either of the two prevailing moral rhetorics). I only want to make one observation: I'm struck with the utter humorlessness with which this battle is conducted by the contending parties—*all* the contending parties. Given the subject matter at issue, this must inevitably distort the entire debate. I would further suggest that a realization (if you will, a raising-into-consciousness) of the inherent comicality of human sexual behavior might reveal hitherto unsuspected common ground.

If only they could break into laughter now and then. A commission of Roman Catholic bishops discussing marital chastity; a study group of Presbyterian theologians delving into the morality of masturbation; a gay-and-lesbian task force designing wedding ceremonies, with all the bourgeois frills, for graduates of bathhouses and leather bars. The aforementioned Parliament of the World's Religions missed a great opportunity there. Instead of endorsing the Küng-Kuschel manifesto of global motherhood-and-apple-pie niceness, it could have appointed a number of task forces on sexual ethics: a Christian-Confucian task force on foot fetishism, a Jewish-Buddhist task force on polygamy. When these task forces would eventually have published their reports, there might have been outbreaks of helpless laughter even in the Roman Curia and at Princeton Theological Seminary—perhaps even redeeming laughter.

And surely, if one reflects about sex these days, one should not omit mention of President Clinton. When it is said that he has a problem with the "character issue," several matters come up, but invariably a major question concerns his alleged sexual escapades. I have no way of knowing how much cre-

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dence to give to the reports about the goings-on in swinging Little Rock during Clinton's governorship. But assume for a moment that all these salacious stories are true. At the risk of offending the morally upstanding readership of First Things (not to mention its morally upstanding editors), I must confess that these stories, if true, would be the best news I've heard about Bill Clinton's character: All the other stories about him suggest an individual with an implacable will to power, in the service of which both people and principles are discarded whenever opportune. This man, it seems, will do almost anything to get or to retain power—but *not*, if these sexy stories are true, at the price of foregoing erotic adventures. Questions about sexual morality aside, this would be a humanizing trait. I would imagine that even in Arkansas such philandering would carry some political risks. A politican who risks power because of sex is more humanly attractive than one for whom power is the *only* aphrodisiac.

Which takes me back to the comicality of sex: Here we have these stories of the Governor, wearing his jogging suit over his by-now famous jockey shorts, being driven by state troopers from one provincial seductress to another. This is the stuff of high farce. Rabelais brought back to life to depict *homo americanus erectus*. And one would further wonder then (Rabelais certainly would) whether Mr. Clinton is *still* engaged in it. There are two possibilities, and it is not clear which would be the funnier one. Possibility one: he *is* still doing it, at much higher risks, with poker-faced Secret Service agents having replaced the jolly Arkansas troopers. Possibility two: he is *not* doing it any more, forced into excruciating celibacy by the harsh requirements of *raison d'état*.

The biblical creation accounts make it very clear that God created human sexuality, "male and female created he them." It is also clear that, in doing so, God intended human beings to procreate and to populate the earth with their offspring. But I would speculate that there was another purpose to this gift of sexuality: to remind human beings that, though created in the image of God, they are still linked to all those other creatures—to the beasts, to the birds, to "everything that creeps on the earth." In other words, as sexual beings, men and women should cultivate humility.

The creation account in Genesis 2 ends with the statement that "the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." But I will further speculate that, in that primeval moment when they first saw each other, they laughed.

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Farmer Jacques says, "Language Has a Life of its Own"

—after Derrida

It has come to this: between the sin
and the syntax, between the gulf
and the gaffe, the words have turned
against us. Our offspring but not
our possessions, they grew sick from abuse,
tired of being twisted and shackled
to sets of assigned meanings.

Now they are gathering at the river.
They mix as we taught them,
wearing their names as announcements.
They shake and vow subversion, to never mean
what we say. So now their charter
reads like *Writing and Difference:*

they're going to be free from meaning,
they're going to be free from us,
they're taking all the library keys,
they're setting the adjectives free.

Terry Fugate

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Christianity and the West: Ambiguous Past, Uncertain Future

Wolfhart Pannenberg

The importance of Christianity in the formation of Western civilization can hardly be denied. That importance is not simply a matter of the past. In the process of secularization Western culture did emancipate itself from its religious roots, but that emancipation was by no means complete. A complete break from Christianity was not intended in the seventeenth century by those who wanted to put the public culture on an anthropological rather than religious foundation. The issue at that time was not a revolt against the Christian religion, nor even against its influence on the culture. Rather, there was an urgently felt need to get beyond the confessional antagonisms and religious warfare that had disrupted the peace of Europe for more than a century. The turn away from Christianity as the basis of public culture was not, at least in the first instance, caused by alienation from the Christian religion, although that turn may have produced alienation in the long run. Beginning with the eighteenth century, however, the humanistic values associated with modernity were viewed as being completely independent from the Christian religion, and even antithetical to it. In our century the circumstance is again different. Today, familiarity with Christian teaching has faded; biblical narratives and the vocabulary of Christian faith are no longer common cultural currency.

Christianity is not the only root of Western culture, of course. A similar importance must be accorded Classical Antiquity, comprising Greek and Roman art, literature, and philosophy, as well as Roman law. In some ways the continuity of modern culture with Classical Antiquity might seem even stronger than with Christianity. Although its treasures had to be reappropriated from time to time in movements of renaissance, there was never a definitive break with the classical tradition. Ideas of Greek and Roman origin, especially ideas associated with natural law, played a crucial part in the transition from a religious to an anthropological basis of public culture in early modernity. But the authority of the classical models in literature was challenged as early as the seventeenth century in the famous *querelle des anciens et des modernes,* when public opinion determined that contemporary French writers were superior to their classical models. Our century has decisively shaken off the normative claim of classical architecture and sculpture, while in higher education the classical heritage is no longer viewed as authoritative.

On closer examination, then, classical antiquity has not fared much better than Christianity in the cultural climate of modernity. Moreover, the classical influence was very largely dependent upon Christianity. In late antiquity and throughout the medieval period, classical literature and philosophy were transmitted by monks and Christian schools. It is doubtful whether much of the classical culture would have survived had it not been appropriated by Christianity. Not all parts of the heritage were equally well preserved, of course; classical sculpture and whatever was related to pagan religion did not fare well. Nonetheless, it is to the credit of Christianity that not only was so much of the classical legacy preserved but it was transfigured by a Christian spirit and disseminated throughout the world along with the faith of the Church.

The cultural tradition that developed under the influence of Christian faith is filled with complexities. These complexities issue in significant part from the distinction between religious and secular realms within a culture that as a whole was informed

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by the Christian faith. The secular was not outside the purview of Christian faith; Christian influence was not limited to what was viewed as religious. Rather, Christian faith informed the understanding of both the religious and secular realms. The very distinction between the religious and secular has its source in the Christian awareness that the ultimate reality of the kingdom of God is still future. That ultimate reality is at present only available through individual faith and the sacramental life of the Church. In this understanding, the social order and public culture that exist short of the final coming of the kingdom are always provisional.

The resulting distinction between religious and secular realms, institutions, and patterns of authority sets Christianity apart from other religiously informed cultures. It is also very different from the relationship between religion and society in the pre-Christian Roman Empire. While all sorts of religious cults were tolerated in ancient Rome, there was no dualism in principle between religious and political institutions. The emperor was the high priest, *pontifex maximus*. The distinction between bishops and emperor that is so important in Byzantine history was unknown in the pre-Christian Roman Empire. While the Byzantine emperor was considered to be the temporal representative of the eternal rule of Christ the heavenly king, the bishops had the responsibility (and power) of judging the orthodoxy of the emperor. Such arrangements reflect the complexity and subtlety of the distinction between religious and secular that was introduced by Christianity.

With the Constantinian epoch, we are told, the Church of the martyrs was turned into a state agency for securing the spiritual unity of the empire. The conventional view is that with the Constantine settlement the Church sold its soul to Caesar in return for respectability and worldly influence. This, it is said, represents the great "fall" of the Church from its pristine spiritual purity. It is noteworthy that some of the harshest judgments of the Constantinian settlement are issued by those who otherwise insist upon the Church's political responsibility, especially its responsibility to bring about change on behalf of justice. In fact, the Constantinian settlement was one way in which the Church sought to exercise political responsibility, and to do so in a way that would not subordinate the Church to worldly purposes.

We need to recall that the emperors from the time of Theodosius were themselves professed Christians, and they sometimes did more for the Church than leading bishops and theologians to restore peace and provide for the flourishing of the Christian community. Moreover, the idea of empire as such is not intrinsically evil. Here one must take issue with Reinhold Niebuhr, who, it seems to me, exaggerated the merits of national rule while underestimating the dangers of nationalism. The Habsburg empire, except for the persecution of Protestants in the early period of its modern history, provides an example of imperial rule that was largely beneficial to the nationalities that lived together under its authority.

The flaw of the Constantinian empire was not so much in its being an empire as in its inherited method of taxation and, most particularly, in its lack of toleration. After the Council of Chalcedon in 451, entire provinces inhabited by monophysite and nestorian Christians who would not accept the decisions of Chalcedon were alienated from the imperial authority. In the seventh century these alienated provinces became easy prey to the rapid expansion of Islam. Before that, it was the emperors more than the bishops who had worked to mediate religious conflicts and prevent the alienation of so many Christians. Unfortunately, their efforts were not successful.

Intolerant dogmatism was probably the most disastrous sin of traditional Christianity from the early centuries up to the beginnings of modern times. Intolerance contributed more to the ambiguity of the Christian past than any other factor, and it is therefore necessary to understand the roots of the phenomenon. We must ask ourselves whether dogmatic intolerance, with all its ugly consequences, belongs to the essence of religious passion for truth, at least in its Christian form. If the answer is yes, the exclusion of religion from the arena of public culture—an exclusion introduced in early modernity after the confessional wars of the post-Reformation period—was justified then and is justified now. But the religious dogmatism that emerged as early as the Constantinian period can also be viewed as a distortion, even a disease, of the religious mind. If it is that, it can in principle be overcome without extinguishing the religious commitment to truth.

I suggest that the temptation to intolerance is indeed rooted in the Christian eschatological consciousness, but it is not an inevitable consequence of Christian eschatology. The Christian faith is based upon the conviction that the ultimate future and truth of God has become present reality in Jesus Christ. This consciousness of the presence of the eschaton, of the ultimate, easily leads to the conclusion that the teaching of the Church also has the status of ultimate truth, to the exclusion of alternative understandings of reality. Such reasoning, however, disregards the critical distinction first expressed by the Apostle Paul: While the truth of God's revelation is indeed ultimate, our understanding of that truth is always provisional and will remain so until the end of history (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). This distinction is of utmost importance because it yields the imperative of tolerance. While God's revelation is absolute truth, our understanding of it, also as reflected in ecclesiastical teaching, remains provisional and partial.

We do not possess the truth in the sense of owning it or having it at our service. It is precisely

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our commitment to the truth that is always beyond our secure apprehension that requires us to respect those who offer alternative accounts of the truth, both within the Church as well as outside. In other words, tolerance is not against the truth; it is the truth that makes tolerance imperative. When the distinction between the ultimate truth of God and our provisional understanding of that truth breaks down, intolerance seems to be the natural course for those who take truth claims seriously. This, then, is the disorder or disease of the Christian eschatological consciousness that has produced so much of the ambiguity in our culture's Christian past.

A first case in point was the dissociation of the Christians from the fate of the Jewish people after the destruction of Jerusalem and the second temple by Titus. In contrast to the argument advanced by the Apostle Paul in the Letter to the Romans, the Church of later centuries no longer understood itself to be involved with the Jews in a common history of election and salvation. Rather, the Church understood itself to be the final form of the one people of God, to the exclusion of the Jews. The same exclusivism, arising from an unqualified sense of finality, is at the heart of Christian dogmatism and intolerance. In all these instances, Christians overlooked the provisional character of the believer's existence short of the final coming of the kingdom.

This dogmatism became, time and again, the occasion for unnecessary divisions within the Christian community. It led to particularly disastrous consequences in the West where it was combined with the ambitions of the papacy to exercise power over all institutions of governance, both ecclesial and civil. The ambitions of the papacy contributed perhaps more than any other single factor to the tragic history of the Christian West. In the Middle Ages there was a loss of harmony between spiritual and civil authority, and later, at the time of the Reformation, the rupture of ecclesial unity led to the confessional wars that made necessary the emancipation of the social order from religious authority in order to reestablish social peace. While I believe that a petrine office for furthering peace and unity in the communion of all Christians might be beneficial for all the churches, and might even be a requirement for their unity, this should not blind us to the historical record of the papacy. A self-critical appraisal of its role in past centuries could lead to the reforms by which the Roman papacy might fulfill its true vocation to help secure the peace and unity of all Christians. Until that happens, Protestantism continues to have the historical mission to remind Protestants and others of what the gospel requires in the Church's faith and life.

We move now from Christianity's ambiguous past to the contemporary ecumenical situation. My argument is that the renewal of Christian unity is absolutely mandatory not only for the authenticity of the churches in obeying the will and prayer of their Lord but also for the cultural plausibility of the Christian religion. Nothing in the past has been more detrimental to the plausibility of the Christian message than the destructively fanatical controversies among Christians. Perhaps the gospel of love cannot be expected to change the basic conditions of life in this world before the final advent of God's kingdom, but that gospel should be powerful enough to enable Christians to keep peace among themselves and to present their communities to the world as models of reconciliation. To be sure, controversy and division cannot always be avoided so long as questions of doctrine, questions of truth, are taken seriously. But controversy should not be dominant in the picture that Christianity presents to the world, nor should Christians today remain divided simply because their ancestors were divided by controversies in centuries past.

Christian unity does not require that all the confessional traditions except the Roman Catholic Church should disappear. On the contrary, the plurality of traditions in liturgy, ministry, ecclesial organization, and doctrinal expression—so long as they do not contradict one another—belongs to the abundance of Christian faith and life. The different churches will continue, but under conditions that allow for fuller ecclesial unity. Adaptations by all sides will have to be worked out in order to achieve minimal conditions for the mutual recognition that is expressed in sharing at the eucharistic table. As a consequence of such renewed communion, further changes would no doubt follow in due course.

Again, Christian unity is a prerequisite for any renaissance of Christianity's role in public culture. As the history of Christian divisions was the main factor in alienating Western society from its religious roots, so that alienation cannot be overcome without ecumenical reconciliation among the Christian churches. I do not say that such reconciliation is a sufficient condition for the renaissance I have in mind, but I am convinced that it is a necessary condition. At present, however, it must be admitted that ecumenical progress is slow and tedious. This despite a remarkable change of attitudes at the grassroots level and theological dialogues that have achieved greater clarity regarding the obstacles in our doctrinal traditions. As some old obstacles have been overcome, however, new obstacles have emerged. Here I need only mention as an illustration the question of women's ordination, which, contrary to the expectations of most, has become a formidable problem in ecumenical relations.

The ecumenical process is too important to allow it to slow down. As we have seen, it is important for the authenticity of the churches and for Western culture. It is also important for Christianity's relation-

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ship to other religions. Obviously, dialogue with other religions differs from ecumenical dialogue among Christians, for Christians encounter one another on the basis of the same faith in the same Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, Christian attitudes towards persons of other religions cannot escape being profoundly influenced by the ecumenical spirit that is nurtured in intra-Christian ecumenical dialogue. Such ecumenical dialogue nurtures an awareness not of the relativity of our own faith but of the different ways in which that faith can be legitimately expressed. This awareness, this readiness to learn, indeed this eagerness to learn, carries over into our encounter with people of other religions. It is no little thing when a basic disposition of confrontation is replaced by that of mutual respect. Of course, situations of disagreement and conflict will still arise, but such situations are transformed when they arise within the framework of sympathetic perception of the other.

In this framework of Christian ecumenical consciousness, the relationship between Christians and Jews holds a particular, indeed a unique, place of importance. In past centuries Christian intolerance toward Jews was so severe because they—though heirs of the Old Covenant—did not embrace the fulfillment of the promises in Jesus the Christ. Today the new ecumenical consciousness allows Christians to appreciate in more positive terms the presence of Jews as representatives of the biblical tradition that gave birth to the Christian faith. It is only with Jews that Christians can know for sure that they pray to the same God. Christians profess the one God of Israel in trinitarian form, but it is most certainly the one God of Israel whom they profess. They profess him in trinitarian form according to his final revelation in Jesus Christ, the Jew who by his testimony to the kingdom of the one God of Israel became the savior of the world.

The authentically Jewish character of the mission of Jesus, though provocative to his contemporaries (as were the prophets before him), will remain the focal point of Christian-Jewish dialogue in the future. But the controversy over Jesus loses much of its bitterness and poison when both sides look ahead to the kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed, and recognize their own provisional circumstance in their pilgrimage toward that future. In that light, what Christians have in common with Jews is allowed to stand out in its full importance. What they have in common is faith in the one God of Israel, the memory of God's ancient history with his people, and an understanding of the dignity of each person as created by God and destined to share in his image. This conception of the dignity of the person is the basis of an understanding of human rights, an understanding that Christians and Jews share and that cannot be secured apart from such a religious basis. Wherever these convictions with their biblical background become the focus of cultural attention, it is appropriate to speak of a Jewish-Christian tradition that informs our cultural consciousness.

To be aware of the provisional character of Christian existence and of the provisional character of our knowledge of God in his revelation is to undergo a profound change in our consciousness of truth. It is a profound change from the dogmatic consciousness of earlier centuries but—and I must emphasize this point—it does not constitute a surrender to secularism. Awareness of the provisional nature of Christian existence and thought makes possible a more authentic appropriation of the way the believer relates to the absolute truth of God as revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Far from abandoning the Christian truth claim, it is a more self-conscious and therefore more plausible way of asserting that truth claim. Awareness of provisionality does not mean selling out Christian affirmation to the current mood of false modesty that abstains from truth claims in deference to what is falsely called pluralism. Pluralism can mean many things. Pluralism can refer to a cultural situation in which competing truth claims are to be treated with respect. Pluralism can also mean, and all too often it does mean, the assumption that truth claims are no longer meaningful because there is no one truth. That fits nicely the assumption of radical secularism that there can be individual religious preferences but no religious truth.

When in the seventeenth century the social and political system began to emancipate itself from its religious roots, there were compelling reasons for doing so; the mutual intolerance of confessional controversies had destroyed the social peace. Subsequent developments toward a completely secular self-understanding in the public culture of Western societies, however, produced the illusion that societies can survive in the long run without any common religious basis whatever. This is rightly called an illusion or self-delusion because without religion there is finally no limit to individual license except the coercive power of the law. It has been astutely observed by thinkers as various as Rousseau, Dostoyevsky, and, in our own time, Max Horkheimer that, if there is no God, anything is permitted.

In the course of our century evidence has multiplied that a morality based on reason alone, independent of any religious connection, is, to say the least, precarious. Without religion, liberty degenerates into license and coercion. Rousseau spoke of the need for a civil religion, a religion shared by all citizens as a source of adherence to their society. And of course there have been more recent discussions of civil religion, notably in America. Some Christians have expressed legitimate concern about the potentially idolatrous nature of a civil religion. Others have suggested that civil religion is not a religion in

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its own right but refers to a form of public piety that arises from the religious traditions and from interaction among religious traditions. I believe that suggestion is persuasive, but my immediate point is that a sustainable social morality requires a religious basis.

A political order may declare itself neutral toward differences of religious allegiance, but it cannot dissociate itself from religious affinity altogether. One might make the case that the toleration of different forms of religious allegiance is itself based in a particular form of religion. When, alternatively, toleration is based on indifference, and when religious indifference becomes a mark of the public culture, we should not be surprised by the steady increase of unbridled license, by the progressive loss of consensus regarding moral and cultural values, and by social disintegration, leading, more likely than not, to tyranny and the loss of freedom.

There are compelling reasons, then, for Western societies to try to recover their religious roots. The choice is not between religious neutrality and an identification with a particular form of religion at the price of intolerance. The real question is what form of religion a society will choose as the basis of its public culture. It could choose, as some societies have chosen, an idolatrous nationalism or a form of ideological utopianism. Or, with yet other societies, it may choose a form of "fundamentalism." Or—and this is obviously what one hopes for—it might choose a religious tradition that, as a matter of its own self-understanding and as a condition of its own authenticity, requires the idea of toleration. Such a tradition provides a religious basis for the institutionalizing of tolerance in, for example, the separation of church and state. The separation of church and state, it is perhaps not necessary to say in this company, must never mean the separation of religion from public life.

Given alternative religious possibilities, Western societies are well advised to recover their religious roots in a cultural tradition informed by Jewish and Christian beliefs. Western ideas of human rights and especially the underlying conception of human freedom have their basis in these beliefs: in the Christian teaching that the individual person is the object of God's eternal love and that human freedom has its source in the individual's communion with God through faith, and in the Jewish understanding of the dignity of the human person as created in the image of God. In the light of these teachings, individual freedom cannot be unbridled license. Freedom is grounded in a hope beyond this life, in the certitude of a communion with God that makes a person independent from the adversities and temptations of temporal life and issues in a sense of vocation to the service of others. The Christian idea of freedom is basic to the distinction between the secular and the religious, but does not permit that distinction to become a divorce. Rightly understood, the Christian idea of freedom entails toleration and respect for other persons and their ways of using their freedom. It encourages personal creativity while at the same time sharpening the sense of social responsibility.

Among the many contributions of Christianity to the development of culture, one is deserving of special mention—Christian teaching regarding the family. In current discussions it is often overlooked how much the role of women in the context of the family was greatly enhanced by the Christian faith. Christianity opposed divorce as a male prerogative because that violates the permanent bond between husband and wife, and apostolic teaching admonishes husband and wife to mutual love and devotion in place of a one-sided subordination of the woman to her husband. Though these principles were often neglected in the history of Christianity, they are a clear decision for the equal dignity of women in the life of the family. The emancipation of women in the context of the family was a first step toward the establishment of equal rights for women also in public life. Christian teaching regarding the dignity and rights of women is a great Christian asset in the worldwide competition between religious cultures, especially with respect to the missionary expansion of Islam.

The beginning of the third millennium may well witness the resurgence of a culture inspired by Christian values, a culture that may have a powerful appeal for people all over the world. The present impact of Western ideas about human rights provides a foretaste of such a possibility. It is not without reason that representatives of other cultures, especially in Islamic states, protest that the insistence on human rights is an imposition of Western cultural values rather than a reminder of what belongs to human nature universally. It was indeed from a Christian perspective that the idea of human rights and the various catalogues of human rights were developed—from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century American Revolution to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

While Christian in origin, the idea of human rights has a powerful appeal also to individuals in cultures where the values of individual freedom are traditionally less celebrated than in the West. The argument against the Western notion of individual freedom is, of course, that it dissolves all forms of community, decency, and moral propriety. That is a more telling rebuke than many Westerners realize. It reflects more than merely a conservative reaction to change. The rebuke is part of a fundamental criticism of Western secular culture. If Western freedom in fact means no more than individual license, others do well to try to defend their communities and spiritual values against the encroachment of Western secularism. Beyond the defensive mode, Islamic missions in Western societies express a strong sense of

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missionary vocation aimed at liberating Western nations from the materialism and immorality associated with secularism. These Muslims view Christians as having failed in the task of the moral transformation and reconstruction of society. Such criticism is a serious challenge to traditional Christianity and to Western culture. A culture devoid of spiritual and moral values is not equipped to meet that challenge, and is bound for disintegration and decay.

And so, while we can envision a great resurgence of Christianity and Western culture in the third millennium, such a future is by no means certain. Western societies may ignore their need to recover the strength of their religious roots. They may continue headlong on a secularist course, unaware of its certain and dismal outcome. The end of Western culture, however, would not spell the end of Christianity. The Christian religion is not dependent upon the culture to which it gave birth. As it has in the past, the Church can survive and flourish in the context of other cultures.

In earlier periods of modernity, the prophets of secularism confidently expected the decline and final disappearance of Christianity. And secularism did in fact achieve an enormous erosion of popular commitment to the churches, especially in Protestantism. Secularism's greatest success, however, is in the widespread demoralization in the ranks of clergy and theologians who are supposed to proclaim and interpret the truth of the gospel but delude themselves that they are achieving that purpose by adapting Christian faith and life to the demands of secularism. What the situation requires, I am convinced, is precisely the opposite of such uncritical adaptation.

The further secularism advances the more urgent it is that Christian faith and Christian life be seen in sharp contrast to the secularist culture. In posing such a contrast there is, to be sure, the risk of fundamentalism. Today the fundamentalist temptation is strongly felt in both Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. Protestant evangelicalism and the reassertion of the confessional tradition of Roman Catholicism are, in principle, more authentically Christian answers to the challenges of secularism than is the strategy of cultural adaptation and assimilation. That being said, however, there is a danger of fundamentalism on both sides. Fundamentalism of any kind forfeits the Christian claim to universal truth—a claim that is bound up with our culture's understanding of critical rationality—and it loses its hold on the ecumenical opportunity and obligation of our moment in Christian history. What is needed is a strong reaffirmation of the central articles of Christian faith against the spirit of secularism, and then a joining of that to a renewed commitment to rationality and ecumenical openness. Needless to say, such a combination is not easy.

It is quite possible that in the early part of the third millennium only the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, on the one hand, and evangelical Protestantism, on the other, will survive as ecclesial communities. What used to be called the Protestant mainline churches are in acute danger of disappearing. I expect they will disappear if they continue neither to resist the spirit of a progressively secularist culture nor to try to transform it. Since the time of the Reformation, Protestantism was closely associated with the general culture. At first, the price of independence from Rome was accepting the tutelage of the secular authorities. Later, Protestantism availed itself of the opportunity to present itself as the modern form of Christianity peculiarly attuned to modern culture. At times this was carried to the point that it was thought that ecclesial institutions should simply dissolve into the culture.

There was a kind of logic to this idea of "culture Protestantism" so long as the public consciousness was identified with the Christian heritage. But that period came to an end with the breakdown of traditional European culture in the First World War and the destruction wrought by idolatrous nationalisms. Since then, and as a result of disillusionment with the spiritual progress of Western culture, Protestants turned with new urgency to the central importance of the Church in the Christian faith. Also, and not by chance, the ecumenical movement toward ecclesial unity came to the fore, a movement greatly strengthened by the ecumenical engagement of the Roman Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council.

Contrary to what some Protestants had thought, a Christian culture is not a plausible alternative to the ecclesial form of Christianity. If it ever was, it is no longer. There is no alternative to the Church. The further the secularist dominance of the general culture advances, the more clearly the Church, in clear distinction from that culture, emerges as the reference point of Christian existence. The Church takes the form of particular local congregations and of the universal communion of all Christians. These forms of ecclesial allegiance are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, only as they strengthen one another can the Christian community face with confidence the challenges that are ever more strongly posed by both the secular culture and the competing claims of other religions. Thus have we been brought by an ambiguous past to face with confidence an uncertain future. FT

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Killing Abortionists: A Symposium

Paul J. Hill, convicted of killing an abortionist and his security guard in Pensacola, Florida, has advanced the following rationale for his action: "Whatever force is legitimate in defending a born child is legitimate in defending an unborn child."

For some who believe that the moral status of the unborn is the same as that of the born, Hill's axiom is persuasive. We asked a number of people identified with the pro-life cause to respond briefly to the justification put forth by Mr. Hill for the use of lethal force against those who perform abortions.

Helen M. Alvare

There is a starting point for responding to Mr. Hill's rationale that is dramatically more important than investigating theories of justifiable homicide. It is the restatement of the overriding aim of the pro-life movement: to instill in individuals and in society as a whole a respect for the dignity of *each* human life. An important corollary to this arises in light of the present societal turn to violence: the pro-life movement also exists to point the nation toward problem-solving that, in means and ends, respects every human being involved. It does this to witness to the real possibilities for peaceful and humane behavior as against a pervasive pro-choice philosophy that accepts the destruction of human life as a legitimate response to problems.

And for those who remain curious about the intricacies of justifiable homicide theories? One can, under Christian principles, act to defend another's life; one may not intend to kill.

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Hadley Arkes

This is one of those melancholy cases in which we would need the equivalent of a Leo Strauss emergency box: break the glass, pull the lever, and quickly summon to our side a writer schooled in the art of covert teaching or "writing between the lines." Even with the most delicate hand, we run the risk of fostering vast moral hazards—and creating perils for many innocent, earnest people—if we are willing to set into print a truthful discussion of this issue. For the answer should be jarringly plain if we simply take seriously the understanding that is anchored firmly among the opponents of abortion: namely, that the child in the womb cannot be anything other than a human life from its first moments; that a human life may not be taken except for the most compelling justification; and that the justification can never be proportioned, in its gravity, to the height, or the social weight, of the victim. If a person understood that innocent human lives were being destroyed in abortion clinics, without the need even to render a justification, what kinds of things, after all, might we expect him to do? Would the media, for instance, have been filled as they have in this case with reports of "religious zealots" if a band of Jews had killed guards and executioners on their way to work in Auschwitz? Would we have heard stories of the killing of innocent workers, who were merely carrying out orders, and pursuing a policy that was fully "lawful" under the laws of the Third Reich?

Of Mr. Hill's psychic balance, I cannot speak. What we can attribute to him however is this: He understood that the practitioner entering the clinic was willing to destroy innocent human lives, even for the most trivial reason—indeed, even without the need to give a reason. That enterprise had become his vocation, and that purpose was borne with him every

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time he entered the building. Mr. Hill did not engage in killing as his office work. He was moved to an awful, rare act, and he focused his lethal assault on a person who was about to engage directly, and deliberately, in the destruction of an innocent life. Unless we dismantle moral reasoning altogether, or remove the gradations that are critical to moral judgment, it should be evident that these two acts of killing cannot stand on the same moral plane.

But at this moment, the morality of the case is at odds with the law, and that must make a grievous difference. The members of the public who have now absorbed the premises of the law will not see even the rudiments of a justification in Mr. Hill's act. For them, the act cannot appear to be anything other than an act of lawless killing. Any endorsement of the act is bound to be misunderstood then as an endorsement—nay, even the tendering of a franchise—for lawless killing. Of course, the state of mind of the public looking on cannot supply the ground of our moral judgment. But writers and teachers, who help to shape the public discourse, cannot be indifferent to the ways in which they are likely to be misunderstood in the current cast of public opinion. From the lessonbook of Plato's *Crito* we must remind ourselves that there are concerns of prudence at the highest level for paying a decent regard even to the unimproved "opinions" of the public; and there are weighty moral reasons for preserving the willingness to respect even bad laws.

Here, the badness runs deep, and the deeper strain has been set forth for us in these pages by Russell Hittinger: The Supreme Court has now established, in the case of abortion, nothing less than a private right to use violence, for any private reason, without the need, that is, to render any public reason. And now the rest of us are obliged to counsel the Paul Hills of the world that they may not make that same claim to the private use of violence, even when they are seeking not merely a private but a public end: the protection of innocent strangers. That the arrangement is not symmetrical is not to state the most damnable thing about it, or the degree to which it makes of us accomplices in a vicious project. For if we begin to express, even in part, what is morally dubious in this structure, we run the risk of sweeping away the inhibitions of prudence from many earnest people. We court the peril of propelling them to further acts of violence. Of course, the case of Paul Hill could be used, with a legal design, to pose a challenge to the very premises of *Roe v. Wade*. But even that act of high purpose, attended by a legal defense fund, could beget in turn other acts of affirmation and martyrdom. And so we bite our lips and hold back—and by my own account I may have already said more than one should say without the arts of indirection. But our political men and women deceive themselves if they think that this issue can be quietened simply by being displaced to the periphery of our politics. They have not grasped quite yet that this issue can corrupt even parts of our law that do not seem connected to the issue of abortion; and it can be counted on, reliably, to generate a poison for our civic life that will not be abating.

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Francis Canavan

It must be said that the abortionists assassinated in Florida deserve no special sympathy, and certainly no admiration. A frenetic columnist in a New York newspaper called them "the martyred Dr. David Gunn" and "brave Dr. Britton." In fact they were neither martyrs nor heroes but men engaged in the dirty and evil business of killing children in their mothers' wombs.

Courtesy of the U.S. Supreme Court, our legal system has involved itself in a contradiction. It punishes as murder taking the life of a born child, but not only does not punish, but protects as the exercise of a constitutional right, killing the child before birth, if that is what the child's mother wants. One understands why people of strong emotions and unstable minds can become so enraged by this that they take the law into their own hands and execute the executioner.

Nonetheless, they are not justified, either morally or legally, in assuming this authority. There is no universal moral obligation to prevent all evil. Still less does anyone have the moral authority to prevent evil by any and all means that he or his associates consider necessary.

Nor can any legal system accept the right of individuals in their private capacity to make such decisions. Revolution is sometimes justified, as our Declaration of Independence explains at some length, but it can never be a legal or constitutional right. Revolutionary actions, such as killing persons for their crimes (however real the crimes may be), strike at the roots of the order on which the life, liberty, and property of all us depend, and therefore the law cannot tolerate them.

If the law did tolerate them, it would let loose not only those who want to stop abortionists from plying their bloody trade, but animal rights activists, gay-bashers and gay activists, environmentalists who object to cutting down trees and those who are fed up with environmentalists, not to mention the other extremists that our liberal society produces in such profusion.

Finally, killing abortion doctors and bombing their clinics does no good to the anti-abortion cause even from a purely pragmatic point of view. Very few

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babies' lives are saved by such actions. Instead, efforts to do the most basic thing necessary, namely, to persuade the American public to face what the courts and their own elected officials have done by legalizing abortion on demand, are set back immeasurably. The resort to violence hands the pro-abortion lobby and its allies in the media a perfect excuse for refusing to look at the violence done daily to the unborn and to focus instead on the violence done to abortionists. Like it or not, the pro-life cause is of necessity a moral cause whose success depends on persuasion and can only be harmed by acts that horrify the public. I wish to God that some pro-life zealots would come to understand that.

FRANCIS CANAVAN, S.J., *is Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Fordham University.*

Jean Garton

The argument used by Paul Hill rationalizes the exchange of force for persuasion. What he cannot achieve by reason, he feels entitled to take by force, and in so doing demonstrates that it is possible to be anti-abortion but not pro-life.

It is easy to understand the frustration of those who use physical intervention to defend unborn children. Some have received inordinately harsh treatment and penalties for their actions. Yet to accept the principle that sincere convictions justify breaking the law is destructive of our form of government and serves to blunt the Christian witness.

A danger in the rationale advanced by Paul Hill to correct the injustice of abortion is that disrespect for the law often creates further injustice. Anarchy does not serve justice.

We who are pro-life grieve the killing of over thirty million children by legal abortion, but our grief cannot compare to that of the God who created them, who knows them before birth, and who loves them beyond human capabilities. Yet, for some reason, He allows the sin of abortion (and all sin) to continue. But one day He will draw history to a close and then he, the Lord, will settle all accounts.

In the meantime, as citizens living under a democratic government, we are free to debate the law, protest the law, and seek to change the law. We are not free to take the law into our own hands—to become "justice vigilantes."

Because "our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Ephesians 6), violence is too weak a weapon against the evil of abortion. The Word is always more powerful than the sword, even when the "sword" is a gun, a bomb, or any other lethal weapon.

JEAN GARTON *is cofounder and President of Lutherans for Life, which has over three hundred chapters in the U.S.*

Robert P. George

I am personally opposed to killing abortionists. However, inasmuch as my personal opposition to this practice is rooted in a sectarian (Catholic) religious belief in the sanctity of human life, I am unwilling to impose it on others who may, as a matter of conscience, take a different view. Of course, I am entirely in favor of policies aimed at removing the root causes of violence against abortionists. Indeed, I would go so far as to support mandatory one-week waiting periods, and even nonjudgmental counseling, for people who are contemplating the choice of killing an abortionist. I believe in policies that reduce the urgent need some people feel to kill abortionists while, at the same time, respecting the rights of conscience of my fellow citizens who believe that the killing of abortionists is sometimes a tragic necessity—not a good, but a lesser evil. In short, I am moderately pro-choice.

ROBERT P. GEORGE *is Professor of Politics at Princeton University and author, most recently, of* Making Men Moral: Civil Liberties and Public Morality.

Nat Hentoff

Cardinal Bernardin has it right. To be consistently pro-life—in ethics and action—one has to be against capital punishment and war and all other forms of violence, including murder. The killing of an abortionist makes one the mirror image of the abortionist.

I am not an absolute pacifist. If the *only* way to defend one of my children would be by force, I would do that—and be inconsistent. But that is not an ideological act of violence. Ideological acts of violence ultimately lead to more and more murders. And in this case, the killings have weakened the pro-life movement, thereby resulting in the state giving more support to the abortion clinic—increasing the number of abortions.

NAT HENTOFF *is a columnist for the* Village Voice.

Richard D. Land

Can one consistently hold—as millions of Americans do—that abortion is the taking of innocent human life *and* that it is wrong to murder abortion doctors? All but an infinitesimal number of individuals say "yes." But it is not enough merely to state such an opinion; one must be able cogently to defend it against the "logic of death" espoused by persons such as David Trosch. One of the peripheral tragedies of the recent eruption of lethal violence against abor-

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tionists has been the well-meaning, but sometimes overly simplistic, response by some pro-life Christians.

Since 1973, the United States Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution to create the right for a woman to choose to secure the services of a physician who is paid to "terminate her pregnancy"—that is, deliberately to end the life of the developing baby in her womb. This contrived juridical doctrine has resulted in the wanton destruction of over thirty million human lives. Abortion on demand rightly raises the hackles of pro-life Christians and multitudes of others. But does the situation justify a lethal response?

For non-pacifist Christians, the exercise of deadly force is proscribed by clear and definitive principles. According to both civil law and divine moral law, private citizens are permitted to use lethal force against another human being only if this occurs as an unintended effect of the act of defending oneself or another against an assailant's unjust attack. Private citizens are not allowed to *intend* to kill another human being and are not allowed to engage in *premeditated* acts of deadly force in order to accomplish what they intend. The premeditated use of deadly force—as in the cases of capital punishment and just war—rightly belongs to legitimate governments (Romans 13:1-4).

Furthermore, acts of violent civil disobedience (in addition to being oxymoronic) would be justifiable only when a government has completely lost its legitimacy by making unjust laws and precluding opportunities to protest or change those laws. While the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade* inspires moral outrage, opportunities for democratic protest and legal reform still remain. Should circumstances arise in which governments prohibit occasions for reform, Christians, for the sake of conscience, may be forced to consider other measures. Our goal must be reform, not revolution. For example, many Christians felt compelled during the 1850s to violate fugitive slave laws by participating in the Underground Railroad, which illegally assisted slaves in escaping to freedom. That was nonviolent civil disobedience. On the other hand, John Brown and his supporters fomented slave insurrection and rebellion against the state by lethal force. Such acts are beyond the prerogative of *individuals*, Christian or not.

Pro-life Americans must take the moral high ground and vigorously oppose vigilante violence against abortion doctors or anyone else. We must tirelessly provide alternatives to abortion, engage the legal system, and affirm the overwhelming majority of physicians who refuse to perform abortions. So long as American democracy remains a legitimate form of government, with provisions for redress, reform, and nonviolent protest, we must remain "wise as serpents, harmless as doves."

(A comprehensive treatment of these themes is contained in "The Struggle Against Abortion: Why the Use of Lethal Force is Not Morally Justifiable," a statement of conscience drafted by a Christian Life Commission consultation held September 17-18, 1994. Copies are available from the Christian Life Commission, 901 Commerce Street, Suite 550, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.)

Richard D. Land *is Executive Director-Treasurer of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.*

Roger Cardinal Mahony

Paul Hill's rationale is intrinsically flawed since it fails the traditional and multifaceted just war criteria for the application of deadly force. Violent force, if it is ever to be legitimate, must be a last resort of self-defense and must be subject to the requirements of public order. Mr. Hill's position is utterly individualistic and does not acknowledge the need to respect the common good that life is to be protected according to the scrutiny of the law. Murder as a tactic in the fight against abortion is inherently contradictory.

While Mr. Hill's frustration is certainly understandable, expressing moral outrage by vigilante acts of terrorism discredits the pro-life movement. Moreover, these tactics allow pro-abortion advocates to acquire additional public sympathy for their position. Consequently, Mr. Hill's position is bad morality and bad politics.

In the consistent pro-life ethic, means and ends must be intrinsically coherent and must meet the test of objective goodness. The old Latin adage is still pertinent, *bonum ex integra causa malum ex quocumque defectu* (an action must be judged good according to its entire causality, and if it is defective in any of its particulars, it is morally flawed). No matter how reprehensible the actions of physicians who perform abortions are, taking their lives is not the answer to the violence of abortion. Sadly, as a human species we have a long way to go in appropriating the lesson that violence only begets further violence.

Roger Cardinal Mahony *is Archbishop of Los Angeles.*

Frederica Mathewes-Green

Paul Hill's thesis has sometimes been expanded into "the big what-if," the scenario often used to challenge pacifists. What if you had to defend your own children from a criminal? Wouldn't deadly force be justified then?

Anyone finds such a prospect deeply distressing. But the very impact of this image hinders us from re-

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alizing that shooting an abortionist fails the analogy in three important ways.

First, you are not defending, you are attacking. You are lying in the bushes training your sights on an unsuspecting stranger, shooting Dr. Gunn in the back, spraying bullets at Dr. Britton while he's trapped in his truck. It isn't even a fair face-to-face fight. You are adding more violence to the situation, not reducing it, spilling more blood on ground already soaked red.

Second, it is not your own child; someone else's flesh encompasses that child, and we cannot protect that child without reaching its mother. The woman who hires the abortionist drives the whole machine, and picking the doctors off one by one won't stop her. Unless we reach her with help and hope, she'll just offer her money to someone else—and there will always be a taker. As long as abortion is legal, you won't be able to save babies without saving their mothers first.

Third, the doctor is not a "criminal," except in the courts of Heaven. Here in the U.S., he is an honored professional offering a legal service for which there is ample financial demand. If you shoot him, upstanding citizens will be horrified and find someone else to replace him. Because the abortionist's work is legal, not criminal, shooting him is something society at large will not support. It is futile. If we want to waste our time on empty gestures, let's choose those that don't involve killing someone.

A just war demands more than a just cause; among other criteria, it demands that there be reasonable hope of success, that noncombatants be protected, that violence be a last resort. Shooting abortionists fails in all these ways and more. There are many reasons why twenty years of frustration, ridicule, and persecution should have pro-life tempers running high. There are more reasons for us to swallow our pride, turn the other cheek, and humbly save babies the only way we can—by showing ourselves the loving servants of their hurting mothers.

FREDERICA MATHEWES-GREEN *is Director of Communications for the National Women's Coalition for Life and author of* Real Choices.

Bernard N. Nathanson

By invoking the use of lethal force to protect the unborn, Paul Hill breached conventional moral standards in certain critical respects.

If Hill had caught Dr. Britton in the act of commencing an abortion (which is, after all a lethal assault on a human being—I am one of those who draws no moral distinction between the born and the unborn), then he would have been correct in interposing his body between Dr. Britton and the unborn, and if necessary defending the unborn with the use of lethal force if Britton was determined to proceed with his assault. But such was not the case. Hill acted violently, not in a directly intercessory manner, but in a vastly larger capacity, i.e., as a dispenser of justice in a sociopolitical system in which various other doors to legitimate protest and change were still open to him: the abortion conflict continues to be waged in the courts, in the legislative bodies in this country—even in the streets—and he could have availed himself of these opportunities without the primary resort to lethal force.

This was not so in the case of John Brown, who led the ill-fated foray against the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry in 1859. It was Brown's dream to arm the slaves and lead a slave insurrection throughout the antebellum South. It is true that the biblically inspired Brown used as his guiding text "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins," but with the *Dred Scott* decision a fait accompli, and with the inhumane Fugitive Slave Act in force, Brown felt strongly that all legitimate means of protest had been closed to him, and he was thus forced to act as prosecutor, judge, jury, and hangman. (His biblical text proved prophetic: ten of his twenty-two man party—including two of his sons—died in that attack, and he himself was hanged six months later.)

The same may be said of the two Czechs who bombed Reinhard Heydrich's car in May 1942. The Nazi Heydrich was known as "The Genius of the Final Solution," and under the Nazi suzerainty there were no legitimate avenues open for sociopolitical protest. Thus, Jan Kubis and Josef Gabeik (two non-Jewish Czechs) took it upon themselves—with the aid of the RAF which parachuted them into Europe—to act as protectors of the European Jews and simultaneously as dispensers of justice (Heydrich died of his wounds six days after the bombing)—legitimately.

But this is America, and for Hill to position himself as prosecutor, judge, jury, and hangman in this time and place was not a morally sound posture. No single human is entitled to wear *that* divine mantle now, here.

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John Cardinal O'Connor

The direct killing of the innocent is a moral species of murder. Some who oppose murder argue that the abortionist is really a "serial killer" of innocent babies. Indeed, a killer is one who acts, neither out of defense nor compassion, and not pro bono, but one who is paid to kill a moral innocent. Such people argue, further, that deadly force is justi-

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fiable against this "medical hit-man" because it will prevent him (or her) from killing more moral innocents.

This assumes many things that are not true.

First, this line of argument assumes that one can try to kill a potential killer to prevent more killing. But received Christian teaching repudiates that direct intent to kill. Justifiable self-defense applies only to that killing that is not directly intended, i.e., a result that is a secondary effect. For a good Christian explanation of legitimate self-defense, please see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (## 2263-2265).

Second, the justifiable defense argues that the guilt of a known intentional killing (of the abortionist) can be outweighed by preventing another, but as yet unknown, evil. But this offends the cardinal biblical principle that a good end does not justify an evil means (Romans 3:8). This kind of consequentialist argument is thoroughly repudiated in *Veritatis Splendor* (71-83).

Third, shooting the abortionist is not the same as killing in defense of home or family because the latter can be an incidental, unintended, secondary effect, whereas the shooting of the abortionist (according to reports) was intended, premeditated, and not an accident at all.

Further, those who kill on their own authority advance what all pro-life people oppose. When lethal force is used against the abortionist, is not the clinic guard free, and the police officer duty-bound, to repel that attack with force, even lethal force? Where does this spiral end? How is it limited?

Surely, we are all as tired of abortion as we are tired of murder. But we must fight murder without conforming to it nor condoning it; it makes no Christian sense to try to justify murder to limit murder. Long ago, Gandhi warned us what happens when we try to have the end justify the means—the *means* becomes an *end*. Let us attend to God's revelation: "Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Comparisons with Nazi Germany and Dr. Mengele do not enlighten but distract us here. The United States of America today is not Nazi Germany. We are a nation of law, even if not all our laws are just ones (e.g., legal abortion). We do elect our Legislators and Chief Executive: they appoint our Federal Judiciary. Christians (and all other citizens) are free to participate in that process—and they should participate actively and intelligently.

No Christian, however well-intentioned, has the moral right to declare himself the sole detective, district attorney, judge, jury, and supreme court in our democratic society and on his own authority set aside the natural law and the Ten Commandments, allegedly to advance the fifth of those Ten Commandments.

For the first three hundred years of Christian history, the Christians were on the wrong side of unjust laws. Yet, they were convinced and taught us that it is better to suffer evil than to cause evil. "Know this, my dear brothers, . . . the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20). That was infallibly true when written and is just as true today.

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Ralph E. Reed, Jr.

When David Gunn and Paul Hill killed abortion doctors in Pensacola, Florida, they did more damage to the pro-life cause than many of the proponents of abortion have in recent years. To kill in the name of defending life is hypocrisy, pure and simple. When we allow the violence of abortion to overcome our weapons of mercy and grace, we fall to the level of the abortionist. In a sermon delivered in November 1956 in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Always be sure that you struggle with Christian methods and Christian weapons. Never succumb to the temptation of becoming bitter. As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapons of love."

Martin Luther King overcame the violence of segregation and the injustice of Jim Crow through nonviolence and through Christian methods. Those who advocated violence against white segregationists were wrong. Those who advocate violence against abortionists today are wrong. In seeking to promote and defend the sanctity of innocent human life, we must allow mercy to overcome bitterness, justice to overcome hatred, and nonviolence to overcome violence. How we conduct ourselves will ultimately be as important as the principles for which we stand. Pro-life leaders must be vigilant and consistent in denouncing violence as a tactic for their movement.

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Ann Scheidler

Christians have struggled for centuries with the issue of if and when killing a human being is justified. Christian society moved from a position of absolute refusal to defend oneself even from fatal attack to the writings of Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* in the fourteenth century, which remain the standard for Western law with regard to the use of force.

The first criterion for the use of force is: *The force used to prohibit harm to an individual must be the least amount of force reasonably necessary to protect oneself or another.* Shooting an abortionist is not the

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least amount of force necessary to prevent the killing of unborn children. A whole array of tactics could prevent an abortionist from getting to the business of killing children.

Stopping an act of aggression in defense of oneself or another must be with the moral certitude that harm will be inflicted upon that individual if force is not used. Since we cannot know for certain what is in the heart and mind of the abortionist on any given day as he goes into the abortuary, we cannot prove that harm will be done to an individual. Each of the abortionists who have testified at the Pro-Life Action League's "Meet the Abortion Providers" conferences is someone who walked into his or her abortion clinic one day for the last time—to clear out his desk and quit. It is important to remember also that the provider is not the principal threat to the baby's life. He is the hired killer. The mother is the imminent aggressor, and she is frequently under pressure from a boyfriend, a husband, or a parent. She is still free to go to another abortionist if the first one is unavailable. The challenge is to help the pregnant woman recognize the value of her own child and to help her cope with the factors that are leading her to an abortion.

The person preventing the harm to an individual cannot intend to inflict mortal injury on the aggressor. Since the Christian has a scriptural mandate to love his enemies, when intervening for the life of oneself or another, the Christian cannot intend to kill even if that is the result.

We in the pro-life movement have the obligation to seek remedies to the grievous injustice of abortion. But we may not fight evil with evil or inflict moral injury to attain our goals. We are called upon to be loving examples of the peaceful, nonviolent resolution of injustice. We are not the ultimate judges of the actions of the abortionist. Our job is to educate him on the value of life and the grave evil of his actions, to pray for him and provide him the opportunities and incentive to quit the abortion business. We leave to God the awesome responsibility of Judge.

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Terry Schlossberg

Paul Hill's philosophy is one of anarchy. It opposes the role of government expounded in the religious tradition into which he was received. Hill lost his ministerial credentials in one Presbyterian body in 1992; he was excommunicated by another in 1993 for advocating killing abortionists as justifiable homicide.

Hill is correct to assume that efforts to protect unborn children ought to be consistent with those to protect the born. But he is in deadly error to assume that individuals, in place of civil government, bear responsibility to take up the sword, so to speak, in defense of the innocent. Hill joined the ranks of the guilty and separated himself from biblical teaching when he chose to advocate killing abortionists and to become their executioner.

The biblical and confessional tradition assigns to the civil government the role of keeping order, maintaining justice, protecting the innocent, and "draw[ing] the sword," when necessary, "against all malefactors, seditious persons, thieves, murderers . . . and all those whom God has commanded [it] to punish and even to execute" (Second Helvetic Confession). John Calvin taught that even evil government is to be preferred over anarchy. He argued that "[I]t is better to live under the most savage tyrant than without any government at all" (Commentary on Daniel 4).

The Supreme Court and the current Administration have frustrated the proper role of government and prevented the protection of the unborn by just and legal means. But Hill's philosophy abandons the effort to restore government's proper role and, instead, usurps it. Those who hold his view are not adhering to God's higher law. They put themselves above all law. The effect of their view is to undermine government and promote a situation that leads inevitably to serious disorder in society.

In giving a free hand to abortionists, the government has failed to restrain evil. But Christians and other American citizens cannot overcome this evil by undermining the role of government. Those who take that course can expect only to bring judgment on themselves even as those who take the lives of the innocent are under judgment.

We should not lose our sense of shock and abhorrence at the systematic and regular killing of the unborn simply because it is a daily occurrence in American life. Neither should we forget the slippery slope that is already claiming the lives of other weak and vulnerable persons. Responding to a rise in abortions, the Presbyterian Church in 1869 spoke out against it as a "crime against God and against nature." That assembly went on to exhort pastors to end their silence and tolerance of the practice, and "endeavor by all *proper* means to stay the floods of impurity and cruelty" (emphasis added).

As St. Paul wrote: "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments . . . ," not people (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). "To do no harm," and to pray for those who do, is the heart of the movement that springs from a desire to protect and care for all our neighbors in the human community.

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Ronald J. Sider and Keith J. Pavlischek

Despite the apolitical appearance of Paul Hill's defense, this was more than a simple act of homicide. It was, in fact, a revolutionary act, a direct assault on the very legitimacy of the American regime and the rule of law. While we believe permissive abortion laws are a grave injustice, abortionists are protected and (regrettably) their actions are legitimated by these laws. Hill's pithy enthymeme is removed from the broader context of biblical revelation and traditional Christian moral reflection on the use of force in defiance of political authority.

First, biblical revelation on the prima facie legitimacy of political authorities should give us pause. The apostolic admonition, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Peter 2:13), was written to Christians in Asia Minor who were suffering unjust persecution at the hand of an oppressive government. This, coupled with the apostle Paul's warning, "He who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed" (Romans 13:2), at the very least places the burden of proof upon those who would advocate the use of violence in defiance of public authority. The burden of proof for such an action clearly rests with Hill and those who would defend his actions, not with those of us who condemn them.

Second, regarding traditional Christian moral reflection on the use of force: pacifists and just war advocates will disagree on whether Christians may ever participate in a "justifiable revolution." Those of us who are Christian pacifists will insist that opposition to an unjust regime may only take the form of *nonviolent* civil disobedience. Those of us who embrace the just war tradition believe that armed opposition against tyrannical rulers who, in Calvin's words, "violently fall upon and assault the common folk" is, at times, a legitimate moral option. It would thus seem that Hill's challenge poses a greater problem for the pro-life just warrior than the pro-life pacifist. But not by much.

If we subject Paul Hill's defense of his actions to criteria required for a "justifiable revolution" (analogous to the *jus ad bellum* criteria of a justifiable war), it fails to stand up under even cursory examination. Granting the ultimate justice of the pro-life cause, no reasonable person could claim that all the just war criteria are met: (1) Given the opposition to such actions by the pro-life movement, and more broadly the lack of wide popular support for such actions, it hardly has any reasonable chance for success and, most likely, will be counterproductive. (2) When one factors in the possibility that this will undermine respect for the rule of law, there is no sense of due proportion between the evil effects of employing violent means and the good to be achieved (proportionality). (3) All nonviolent means have not been exhausted (last resort). And finally, (4) the act was not issued from legitimate authority.

It may seem that the criterion of legitimate authority is contradictory when considering the revolutionary use of force against an unjust regime. But even "justifiable revolutions" must make some attempt to meet this criterion. Calvin's defense of revolution rested on the legitimacy of "lower magistrates." It was they, not the "private citizen," who were to withstand "the fierce licentiousness of kings." At a very minimum, Christians who resort to violence must be able to justify their actions within a community that has wide and popular support. That Paul Hill had been excommunicated from his church is particularly relevant in this regard. He cannot appeal to anything analogous to Calvin's "lower magistrates" and therefore cannot evade Calvin's and the Christian tradition's opposition to private revolutionary action. There lies the critical distinction between the Christian just warrior and the terrorist or anarchist.

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George Weigel

Tragically and ironically, the murder of abortionists illustrates a point that the right-to-life movement has tried to make for years: namely, that privately authorized lethal violence is lethal for democracy. Abortion kills innocent human beings. It also has the potential to kill the civil society that makes democratic self-governance under the rule of law possible. Just as democracy is rendered impossible when states assert powers and legitimize "rights" that are somehow "beyond" the reach of the moral law, democracy becomes tenuous to the point of disappearance when individual citizens assert a right to lethal violence for the ends of personal convenience—or as an expression of personal conviction. Many molders of public opinion in America seem to understand this in the case of the murder of abortionists. They might ponder the principle (and the public impact of its persistent violation) a bit more carefully in the case of abortion on demand.

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Educating Father Abraham: The Meaning of Fatherhood

Leon R. Kass

My theme is the education of the patriarch Abraham, Father of Judaism, father of Christianity, father of Islam. God Himself undertakes Abraham's education in order to address and to overcome the natural psychic and social human obstacles to righteous and reverent living, obstacles amply displayed in the pre-Abrahamic stories of Genesis. Abraham, the new man, is to be the founder of a new nation steeped in God's new way, which this nation is to carry as a light unto all the nations of the world. The new way entails rightful conduct toward and rightful relations with members of one's household, members of the tribe, strangers and members of other nations, and the divine. I have taken as my focus Abraham's education in matters domestic: in the first part of this essay (First Things, November), the meaning of wife; here, the closely connected meaning of fatherhood. Educating the father of his people means, in the first instance, educating him to be a proper husband and father; for the perpetuation of God's new way will depend not on a fortuitous succession of naturally virtuous men and women but on the proper rearing of the young in every generation to the task of transmitting their moral and spiritual heritage.

In the first article, we saw how this task of transmission is at the heart of the meaning of husband and wife. Rightly understood, man cleaves to his wife not because she is "flesh of his flesh," nor because she is beautiful or because she loves him back, but because she is his chosen, willing, and coequal lifelong partner in self-conscious devotion to the work of perpetuation. Here, we shall look more closely at the work itself, or at least the paternal part of it. We shall look at Abraham's education in fatherhood.

A comparable discussion could, of course, be presented about Sarah's education in motherhood. Central to this tale would be the wondrous birth of Isaac, after a lifetime (ninety years) of infertility, which leaves no doubt that children are a gift, not a maternal product and possession—the latter a dangerous, albeit perfectly natural, belief of womankind, as we learn from Eve's proud boasting at the birth of Cain. But this must remain a tale for another day. Our concern here is Abraham, who, like most men, needs much more instruction in these matters than does his wife.

I. Fathers and Sons: The Uninstructed Way

The pre-Abrahamic chapters of Genesis tell one crucial story that explores the uninstructed or natural ways of fathers and sons and the vexing difficulties that confound their relationship: the story of Noah and his sons (Genesis 9:18-27).* Noah, after the flood, turns to the grape and is laid low by drink; without his clothes and prostrate in his tent in a drunken stupor, Noah lies dehumanized and "unfathered," stripped of all respectability. His disrespectful son, Ham, views his father in disgrace and traffics in his shame; he metaphorically kills his father *as a father*, without disturbing a hair on Noah's head. Noah as father is reduced to mere male-source-of-seed; eliminated is the father as authority, as guide, as teacher of law, custom, and a way of life. The danger of such a reversion to the merely natural, shameless, and amoral—i.e., to the pagan—view of human affairs lurks in every household, both from the side of disreputable fathers and from the side of impious sons.

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* For a fuller treatment, see my essay "Seeing the Nakedness of His Father," *Commentary*, June 1992.

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In such cases, the iniquities of the fathers are often visited upon the sons. Noah, awakening to discover what Ham had done, curses Canaan the son of Ham, measure for measure driving a wedge between Ham and his own son. Ham becomes the father of peoples—including the Canaanites and the Egyptians—whose abominable sexual practices (and, hence, whose family life) will be the antipodes to the Jewish laws of purity. In contrast, Shem, the son who piously covers his father's nakedness without even looking upon it, becomes the father of the line that leads to Abraham. Shem, we know not how, appears to have divined the sacred meaning of the authoritative relation of father and son. But as we see from Noah's Dionysiac weakness and Ham's antinomian rebellion, one cannot rely on nature alone (or on the uninstructed natural family) to ensure decency or to guarantee the transmission of righteous ways. Fathers and sons will both need instruction in how to promote filial piety and how to secure the work of cultural perpetuation.

II. Abraham's Paternal Beginnings: His Father and His Nephew

As we noted in the first part of the essay, Abraham had an unusual father: Terah had children very late, perhaps because he was into other things. More important, he was a radical, a man who left behind the land and presumably also the ways of his fathers in search of something new. A severed link in his own cultural chain, Terah set the example for Abraham's own radicalism. Cultural *dis*continuity was part of the cultural teaching on which Abraham was raised. There is also something significant in the name Terah gave his first-born son: Abram, which means "lofty or exalted father," or perhaps "the father is exalted," is in either case an expression of paternal pride at his birth. But we must imagine that this paternal pride was in the end dissipated, as Terah lives long enough to feel the isolation that often comes with having abandoned the ancestral ways: one of his three sons (Haran) dies in his young manhood, a second (Nahor) refuses to follow his father on his journey toward Canaan, and the third, Abram, leaves him behind in Haran where he lives alone for sixty years and dies without heirs to bury him. Though he stems from Noah's pious son Shem, and though he himself was more attached to his father than was his brother Nahor, Abram's immediate paternal ancestry is not a model for the work of cultural perpetuation.

Abram's condition as a homeless, rootless, godless, childless son of a radical makes him a natural candidate to respond to God's promise of land, seed, rule, and fame. But, for the same reasons, he is not, to begin with, well educated in the successful art of fatherhood, in the work of transmission. Such lessons—and they will prove complicated—he must gradually learn through his adventures.

When God calls Abram out of his father's house, Abram is clearly enticed by the promise of greatness and prosperity. The content of the promise is clearly political, and its scope is global: Abram will become the blessed founder of a great nation and will acquire a great name, and all the families of the earth will be blessed because of him. Not bad work if you can get it, and Abram, age seventy-five, sets off immediately, "as the Lord had spoken unto him." But not unaccompanied: "and Lot went with him" (12:4). The promise of founding a great nation might have seemed odd to a childless man, and so Abram maximized his prospects by taking not only his barren wife Sarai but also his nephew Lot, the son of his deceased brother Haran, whom Abram had in effect adopted. When Abram arrives in Canaan, to find it occupied, God appears and informs him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." God hints that Abram will yet have seed, but the focus is on the land, this promised land. Abram is not yet thinking in a fatherly way—and for obvious reasons.

Circumstances change. After the episode in Egypt, recounted in the last article, Abram and Lot come to a parting of the ways, "for their substance was great so that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle" (13:6-7). Now grown wealthy and wishing to avoid trouble more than he wishes to preserve his family intact—"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee . . . for we are brethren" (13:8)—Abram magnanimously offers Lot the first and finest choice of land. Attracted by civilization, Lot chooses the fertile plain of the Jordan (eventually settling in Sodom), and the men "separated themselves the one from the other" (13:11). But in the immediate sequel, Abram no doubt feels a sense of loss, and needs consolation:

> And the Lord said unto Abram *after that Lot was separated* from him: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which thou seest, *to thee* I will give it, and *to thy seed* forever. *And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.* Arise, walk through the land in the length and breadth of it; for unto thee I will give it." (13:14-17; emphasis added)

Compensating Abram for the recent loss of the more favorable land, God stresses in beginning and ending how the lost land and more will eventually be Abram's. But in the center, addressing Abram's loss of his probable heir, God speaks explicitly and graphically about Abram's own unborn progeny. God tries to put Abram in mind of his prospective paternity. But Abram remains attuned to matters po-

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litical, and he still hasn't reconciled himself to the loss of Lot.

Lot is indirectly the cause of the next episode, which, for the first time, will lead Abram to care powerfully about paternity. The kings of Babylon invade Canaan to suppress a rebellion against their rule. The Canaanite kings are routed, Sodom among the other cities is sacked, and Lot is taken captive. Abram, who initially had prudently sat out the war, now, upon learning that his nephew was taken captive, leads forth his band of 318 men into battle and wins a mighty victory: he smites the enemy, pursuing them past Damascus, and brings back all the goods, all the people, and his kinsman Lot (who promptly returns to Sodom). Refusing the spoils of war, Abram attempts to return to his previous life but, we infer, he cannot. His brush with death in battle, his fear of reprisals, and perhaps, too, the irrevocability of Lot's separation weigh on his mind.

God is, as usual, exactly responsive, and speaks to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, thy reward shall be exceeding great" (15:1). But God partly misses the mark, for Abram now for the first time is weighed down with a concern for his childlessness, a concern which his encounter with death has now made acute. Abram, who had met all of God's previous interventions with silence, now addresses the Almighty for the first time, and with pathos and passion:

> "O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I shall die childless, and the one in charge of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? . . . Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed, and, lo, my steward will be my heir." (15:2-3)

God now seeks to give reassurance on the subject of inheritors:

> "This man shall not be thine heir; but he that shall spring forth from thine own loins shall be thine heir." And He brought him forth abroad, and said: "Look now towards heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to count them"; and He said unto him: "So shall thy seed be." (15:4-5)

With a more specific promise about his own progeny, and a loftier image to convey their innumerability, God for the time being calms Abram's fears.

But not for long.

III. Ishmael

When Abram next impatiently demands proof that he will indeed inherit the promised land, God enacts the awe-inspiring covenant-between-the-sacrificial-pieces and, in the eerie darkness, gives Abram some bad news: not he but only his seed will inherit the land, and then only after they have suffered four hundred years of slavery as strangers in a strange land. God concludes with remarks about Abram's own fate:

> "But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. And in the fourth generation they shall come back hither. . . ." (15:15-16)

Forced by God directly to contemplate his own death, Abram now more than ever longs for a son. It is in this frame of mind that he receives and eagerly accepts Sarai's offer to try to have a child of his own by Hagar the Egyptian. God neither interferes with nor approves the surrogate arrangement, and Abram gets the son he wants in Ishmael. At age eighty-six, fatherhood at last.

But fatherhood is more than siring, just as God's new way is more than the way of nature. Now that Abram has a son, the crucial task of perpetuation begins in earnest, and Abram must be shown what is required.

As Ishmael approaches young manhood (age thirteen), God, looking to the future, proposes a new covenant, giving Abram a new charge: "[W]alk before me and be thou whole-hearted [or "perfect" or "blameless"; *tamim*]. And I will make My covenant between thee and Me, and will multiply thee exceedingly" (17:1-2). The new covenant is announced in explicit relation to the theme of procreation and perpetuation.

God's part of the covenant is very generous and full: identifying Himself to Abram (for the first time) as "God Almighty," He promises Abram (whom he here fittingly renames "Abraham," "father of multitudes") that He will make him exceedingly fruitful, the father of nations and the progenitor of kings; He will make an everlasting covenant with the seed of Abraham to be their God; He will give unto them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. As for Abraham (and his seed), the obligation is simple: keeping the covenant simply means *remembering* it, that is, marking its token or sign in the flesh of every male throughout the generations, by the act of circumcision.

Why should *this* covenant between God and Man be marked by circumcision? We can think of many possible reasons, all of them apt. Unlike the rainbow, the sign of God's earlier covenant with Noah and all life after the Flood—which addressed only the preservation of life rather than its moral character and which accordingly demanded nothing from man in return—circumcision is an *un*natural sign, both artificial and conventional. It is the memorial of an agreement that deems it necessary (hence, conventional); it must be made by man (hence, artificial); yet it is marked in the organ of generation (hence, also natural). The world as given, and life

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even when secure ("No more floods"), are not yet completed; the best way to live remains hidden and must be revealed by additional human effort, exercised in the face of powerful human drives that lead us astray.

Circumcision emphasizes, even as it also restricts and transcends, the natural and the generative, sanctifying them in the process: under God's command, men willingly produce in their living and generational flesh the mark of their longing for God, of their desire for His benevolence and care. Though it is the child who bears the mark, the obligation falls rather on the parents; it is a perfect symbol of the relation among the generations, for the deeds of parents are always inscribed, often heritably, into the lives of their children.

The obligation of circumcision calls parents to the parental task. Performed soon after birth, it circumcises their pride, reminding them that children are a gift, for which they are not themselves creatively responsible. More importantly, they are called from the start to assume the obligations of transmission. They are compelled to remember, now when it counts, that they belong to a long line of descent, beginning with Abraham who was called and who sought to walk before God and to be whole-hearted. They are reminded that bearing the child is the easy part, that *rearing him well* is the real vocation. They are summoned to continue the chain by rearing their children looking up to the sacred and the divine, by initiating them into God's chosen ways. And they are made aware of the consequences for their children—now and hereafter—of their failure to hearken to the call: "And the uncircumcised male . . . that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken My covenant" (17:14). With circumcision, the child, and all *his* potential future generations, are symbolically offered to the way of God.

And why a rite applicable only to the male children? Because males especially need extra inducement to undertake the parental role. Freed by nature from the consequences of their sexuality, probably both less fitted and less interested by nature than women for the work of nurture and rearing, men need to be acculturated to the work of transmission. Virility and potency are, from the Bible's point of view, much less important than decency, righteousness, and holiness. The father is re-called to this teaching, and, accordingly, symbolically remakes his son's masculinity for generations to come. When he comes of age, the son will also come to understand the meaning of the mark of his fathers and their covenant with God; presumably, it will decisively affect how he uses his sexual powers and how he looks on the regenerative and nurturing powers of woman.

As Abraham prepares to execute the covenant, circumcising himself (at age ninety-nine) as well as Ishmael and all the males attached to his house, God announces that Sarah will bear him a son, Isaac, within the year. Isaac, son of Sarah, not Ishmael, son of Hagar, is to be Abraham's true heir within the new covenant. Abraham resists the suggestion, partly out of disbelief, partly out of his attachment to his firstborn; but the reader is given to understand that, to overstate the point, Abraham is here with Ishmael undergoing basic training, as it were, just practicing to become the father of Isaac. Thus, now he obediently circumcises his son; only later, on Mount Moriah, will he fully understand what it really means.

IV. Father or Founder: A Painful Lesson

To this point we have been emphasizing how Abraham is being educated to understand that founding a great nation and gaining a great name requires a concern for progeny and transmission, and, in particular, requires rearing one's sons in full memory of God's solicitude and care. Also, Abraham is here still in the midst of a protracted education about the meaning of wife without which he cannot fully enter into proper fatherhood. But in the midst of these domestic transformations, God undertakes to give Abraham some instruction in political justice, indispensable for a political founder who cares for righteousness. This sobering instruction greatly alters Abraham's view of the world, including his understanding of fatherhood. He begins to see that proper fatherhood must be grounded not on the natural love of your own but on the acquired love of the right and the good. I refer to the famous conversation between God and Abraham about the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.

God arranges the encounter, "seeing that Abraham shall surely become a *great and mighty nation*, and *all* the nations shall be blessed in him," and reveals for the first time His true interest in Abraham: "For I have known him, to the end that *he may command his children and his household after him*, that they may keep the ways of the Lord, *to do righteousness and justice*: to the end that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him" (18:17-19; emphasis added).

Abraham, the founder of a great nation, must do righteousness and justice, and command his children after him to do likewise, for only in this way can Abraham bring the Lord's righteous ways to the entire world, and thus be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. Although he has shown himself to be personally just, Abraham, because he is to be a *political* founder, needs also some instruction in political justice, that is, in justice regarding whole communities—cities or nations. God not only wants Abraham to know about the judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah; He also wants him to understand its rightness. More important, God also intends that Abraham share responsibility for the punishment as a result of his participation in the judgment. Through

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this conversation, Abraham is to become God's partner, as it were, in executing political justice.

The Lord makes known, presumably within Abraham's hearing, the problem that demands His attention:

> "Verily, the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceeding grievous. I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know." (18:20-21)

The cry of injustice rising from these two cities has brought God to investigate: He does not rely on hearsay, He will see for Himself. What He intends to do about it is not stated.

Abraham draws near the Lord and initiates the conversation:

> "Wilt Thou indeed consume the righteous with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed consume and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of the whole earth do justly?" (18:23-25)

We are immediately struck by the boldness and intensity of Abraham's speech; unlike most of his subsequent offerings in this conversation, he makes here no preface and offers no apologies for his challenge, and the repetitions of certain phrases (e.g., "that be far from Thee") indicate his passion. But closer examination provides some clues about just what it is that moves Abraham so. It is not, I submit, compassion for strangers, but a concern for justice centered closer to home.

It is Abraham, not God, who introduces the punishment of destruction; God was still investigating, but Abraham, far from shrinking from punishing the wicked, is the one who suggests it. Justice, not compassion or mercy, is on Abraham's mind, as it is on God's. But Abraham's leap to questioning the punishment of wholesale destruction may be motivated by something closer to home. Here is a big clue: God had announced his interest in the wickedness of *two* cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, but Abraham in his questioning speaks only of *one* city, although he does not name it. God, reading Abraham's mind, will in his next response speak only about Sodom, and by name. As a result, we learn that Abraham's interest in the fate of Sodom is not disinterested; for Sodom is still the home of his nephew, Lot. The commentators who hear in Abraham's pleas only a concern for total strangers have forgotten the place and importance of Lot. Abraham, who risked his very life—and with it the divine promise—to rescue Lot in the war of the kings, will certainly not have become indifferent to the fate of his kinsman just because he now has an heir in Ishmael. The presence of Lot among the wicked in Sodom captures Abraham's attention and engages his passions; and Lot becomes the hook for catching and enlarging Abraham's concern for justice. Because it would be both ignoble and unjust to engage in special pleading, Abraham cannot make his argument in personal terms; he must make it in terms applicable both to his own and to the strangers alike.

Even leaving aside the question of Lot, Abraham's point of departure is clearly a concern for *personal* justice: Is each person getting what he deserves? More precisely, Abraham focuses entirely on the danger of injustice for the *righteous*: he is not at all arguing that the wicked should be spared out of mercy or compassion, only that the righteous not suffer with the guilty. This concern for personal justice, and especially for the fate of the righteous, is also not disinterested; Abraham surely wants to know whether his own righteousness will be rewarded as promised. If God is capricious or just plain careless with the righteous, he Abraham could suffer unjustly despite his efforts at righteousness; he too could fare much less well than he deserves.

But lurking in these personal concerns are also larger and even more important questions, crucial to Abraham's relationship to God and to his founding mission. For he desperately needs to know whether divine justice bears a sufficiently close resemblance to our human intuition about justice, namely that the good shall prosper and the wicked (only) shall suffer. Is God's justice, seen from this human viewpoint, arbitrary or capricious? If so, will it be possible to follow Him wholeheartedly as God commanded? For this reason especially, Abraham insists on learning whether the righteous must suffer with the wicked.

But this question is crucial not only for Abraham and for his need to discover whether God's justice and human justice are basically congruent. It is crucial also for God and for the main lesson that He wants to teach Abraham and about which Abraham already has his suspicions. For Abraham is dimly aware that there may be a tension between what is just for a city and what is just for individuals. He senses that if the city gets judged as a whole, the results for individual city dwellers will not be just, because some righteous will suffer with and for the guilty. Abraham to begin with rebels at this prospect. Accordingly, he eschews the political perspective (which is concerned with the city) and focuses entirely on the fate of the righteous individuals—and probably for all the reasons mentioned. No wonder he demands to know if the Judge of the whole earth is going to act justly, that is, render to each person ex-

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actly and only what is owed.

In contrast with Abraham, God is much more interested not in individuals, the righteous ones, but in the city, and its wickedness. Still, he welcomes Abraham's insubordination in the name of personal justice in order to educate him. In accepting Abraham's plea about the fifty righteous, he promises to spare the city if they be found in Sodom, but he subtly tries to get Abraham to think also about the problem of the whole. Where Abraham had asked Him "to forgive the place for the fifty righteous therein" (18:24), God stresses the totality: "I will forgive *all the place* for their sake" (18:26; emphasis added).

Abraham, when he speaks next, repeats God's use of "all," but he clearly hasn't grasped the point. Looking away from all the city, he wants God to look *only* at the group of the vulnerable fifty righteous: "Perhaps there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt thou destroy all the city *for the lack of five*?" (18:28; emphasis added)

God, although again allowing himself to be moved by Abraham's plea, nonetheless rejects its focus and the terms Abraham had used. Abraham had looked only at the fifty righteous and implied that God might destroy the whole city for a mere *lack of five* such. God, correcting Abraham's calculations, promises not to destroy the city if he finds there the positive *presence of forty-five* righteous men: "I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five" (18:28).

From now on, accepting God's correction, Abraham will do the bargaining solely in terms of the size of the saving remnant. Encouraged by God's answers, he continues to work down the number, making the case for forty, thirty, twenty, and, finally, ten. But, curiously, Abraham voluntarily stops the bargaining at ten. This is strange. On the principle that has driven him from the start, and that has apparently been supported at every turn by God's response—namely, that the righteous ought not suffer—Abraham might have pressed the case to its logical conclusion: to spare the city for the sake of one righteous man. Why does Abraham break off at ten? Why does he not push all the way to one?

Abraham may have been afraid or ashamed to push to the limit, either out of a gradually increasing fear that God will judge him presumptuous or out of embarrassment at revealing a personal interest in his one kinsman, Lot. But fear and shame aside, Abraham may have broken off the bargaining because he had learned something. Encouraged by God's accepting of his conditions, but thereby also brought into closer alignment with the divine perspective, Abraham has begun to think about justice for a whole city. He comes to see that to care about justice for a whole city or a whole nation means that one must be willing to overlook, at least to some extent, both the natural preferences for one's own kin and the demand for absolutely strict justice for each individual. By stopping the bargaining at ten, Abraham (at least tacitly) accepts the possible destruction of Lot, the man he once called "brother," the man he once looked to as adopted son and possible heir. And he (at least tacitly) accepts that politics—the life of cities—*necessarily* involves the suffering of at least some innocent and righteous people. If one is to care for the justice of a nation, and especially as its founder, one must be willing not only to moderate the love of one's family and the love of personal justice; one must even be willing to sacrifice them, at least in part. Political founding and political justice are a sobering business, because political justice is not altogether just.

There is for Abraham, of course, also some very good news: God is indeed moved by every appeal Abraham actually makes. There is no known gap between God's justice and Abraham's. God is willing to make accommodations, but apparently only if there is a truly saving remnant, only if there exists a possibility to lift up the city as a whole, that is, only if there are *enough* righteous men to effect reform. (If not, the innocent and righteous necessarily go down with the guilty—as they do in every wicked city, down to the present day.) By showing Abraham their common ground about the principles of justice, God enables Abraham to gain His perspective on the practice of justice in the political realm. Abraham learns that one must come to care about the righteousness or wickedness of the world, and not only about one's own kin and one's own goodness and its rewards. Most important, Abraham learns that one virtuous man does not make, and cannot save, a nation by his own merit alone.

For Abraham, the lesson could not be more pointed: his excessive preoccupation with God's personal promise, with his own merit and its reward—that is, with personal justice—is in fact at odds with the fulfillment of the purpose of God's promise that he become a great *nation*, steeped in righteousness, to become a blessing to all the others. The implication could not be plainer: because a community once founded will stand or fall together, and because one man's virtue is not sufficient, there is urgent need for education and transmission, beginning with a well-ordered house and with political measures to secure justice in the community. And this lesson could not be more timely. For it is administered to Abraham, via this conversation, just after he has learned that Sarah will bear him the long-awaited son-of-the-covenant within the year. Before Isaac arrives, Abraham is compelled to think less like a natural father, more like a righteous founder, who executes justice and who walks before God. Or, perhaps better, he is compelled to consider that being a righteous father, like being a righteous founder, means to care more for what is right and good than for your own.

The lesson does not end with the conversation. The point is driven home the next morning as Abraham

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awakens to see smoke rising from the cities and all the land of the Plain, "like the smoke from a furnace" (19:28). The text says not a word about Abraham's reaction, but we can try to imagine what went through his mind. For sure, God's evident and mighty power over human life inspired in him awe and dread. But what about the righteous for whom he had bargained? There could have been as many as nine who perished with the guilty—not to speak of innocent newborn babies—as the city went down together. And what of Lot? As Abraham watched, he no doubt concluded that Lot died in the conflagration. With heavy heart, he felt his own responsibility for Lot's death—not only because he agreed in speech to let any less than ten righteous die with the guilty, but perhaps also because he had earlier failed to educate Lot in justice and (in order to avoid strife) had allowed him many years ago to go off to settle in Sodom. The burdens of the father, the founder, and the judge are heavy indeed. Abraham's reflection on the deed of the destruction completes and fixes the political lessons of the conversation of the day before.

As if to tell the reader of Abraham's heavy heart about his "sacrifice" of Lot, the text speaks of smoke ascending like smoke in a furnace, using the words for smoke and ascent connected with the making of burnt offerings. (Indeed, the word used here for ascent, *'olah*, is also the word for burnt offering that we shall meet again soon.) And, in the immediate sequel, we are told "that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt" (19:29). God shows his mercy, saving Lot for Abraham's sake. But—and this is crucial—He does not tell Abraham that He has done so. There will be time enough later to teach Abraham and his descendants about God's mercy. For the time being, the painful lessons of the father's and the founder's justice must be allowed to sink in without a word of consolation.

We wonder whether something of what he learned as he witnessed the smoke rising from Sodom and Gomorrah may have prepared Abraham for his greatest trial, enabling him to respond without so much as a peep of protest about the suffering of the innocent when God asks him to become not just an accomplice in the death of Lot but an actual killer of his own beloved son.

V. Isaac

After the episode with Sodom and Gomorrah, which teaches Abraham both about God's awesome power and about the need to serve righteousness, and after the (second) wife-sister episode involving Abimelech, which completes Abraham's education regarding the meaning of wife, Sarah at last conceives and Isaac is wondrously born, when his mother and father are, respectively, ninety and one hundred years old. The circumstances surrounding his birth enable both Abraham and Sarah to see the permanent truth about parenthood: children are *not* man's products or creatures, and thus the pride that human beings naturally take in their own children as *their own* children is vanity and self-delusion. God commands not only the awesome power of executing justice and destruction; He is also the source of the renewal of life through children, who are life's true answer to mortality.

Abraham, his pride suitably humbled, "circumcise[s] his son Isaac when he [is] eight days old, as God had [earlier] commanded him" (21:4). Isaac, from his birth, is brought within the covenant that commemorates God's new way and man's commission to walk wholeheartedly before Him. His mother Sarah rejoices both in God's beneficence ("God hath made laughter for me"; 21:6) and in this fulfillment of her marriage to Abraham ("For I have borne him a son in his old age"; 21:7). Abraham too is joyous, and makes "a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned" (21:8).

Yet there is still trouble in the house, on account of Ishmael, which must be remedied in order to insure Isaac's ascendancy. At Sarah's insistence, Abraham, with heavy heart and great reluctance but with God's approving endorsement of Sarah's plan, banishes Ishmael and Hagar, bringing the family for the first time into its proper order and harmony. We readers who are gratified by this result should not underestimate the difficulty Abraham probably had in, as it were, "sacrificing" Ishmael his first-born, the first bearer of his great hope for posterity. Only because of his growing sense of what it might mean to walk wholeheartedly before God and because of the wondrous existence of the long-promised heir in Isaac was Abraham able to lose Ishmael, as he had lost Lot before him. Even so, we should consider the possibility that it was Abraham's great reluctance to part with Ishmael which made necessary the more horrible test of separation from Isaac, reported in the story that I will soon discuss at length.

His household reordered, Abraham next secures good relations with his neighbors, Abimelech and the Philistines. Imitating God's practice with him, Abraham enters into a covenant of mutual respect and recognition with Abimelech at Beer-sheba. In gratitude for his new blessed circumstances, "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days" (21:33-34). Everything appears to be set, ordered, and harmonious: Abraham is ready to be both father and founder of his—and God's—great nation. Abraham's course of instruction would appear to have been completed.

As everyone knows, this appearance is deceiving. The hardest and most difficult lesson is yet to come. The story of the binding of Isaac is Abraham's final test.

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No story in Genesis is as terrible, as powerful, as mysterious, as elusive as this one. It defies easy and confident interpretations, and despite all that I shall have to say about it, it continues to baffle me. Indeed, my own approach seems even to me to be too shallow, precisely because I am attempting to be reasonable about this awesome and shocking story.

Let me make clear some assumptions I make in interpreting this tale. First, about its timing: it comes precisely at this time, when all earthly arrangements are apparently set, so that it may clarify Abraham's relation to God, but—and this is crucial—therefore also his relation to his own and to others: Abraham must show that he understands that one's *spiritual* orientation is decisive also for *all human relations.* Second, Abraham at the beginning would have been incapable of meeting this test; thus, the test must be interpreted in the light of his education. His previous adventures have taught him and readied his soul for this final trial and lesson. He has experienced awe, the religious passion, during the dark vision between the sacrificial pieces; he has enacted the new covenant marked by (self-)circumcision—a symbolic act of "partial sacrifice," betokening dedication to God's ways; he has been God's partner in the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, and in his own heart has accepted responsibility for (what he thought was) the "death" of Lot; he has beheld the wondrous birth of Isaac and endured the banishment of Ishmael. He has witnessed not only God's dreadful power but also His insight into men's souls, as well as His solicitude, honesty, justice, restraint, and providence. He has received (from Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the most high God [14:18-20] and from Abimelech [21:22]) the testimony of foreign witnesses to (his own) God's majesty. And he has known intimately God's benevolence toward him, in the gift of Isaac. As a result, now at the end of his adventures, Abraham is ready to replace the "reasons" for being a follower of God: originally, he answered the call largely out of a desire for the promised reward; now, in a reversal, he is ready to follow out of awe-fear-reverence for the One Who promises.

The stark story has a stark beginning:

> And it came to pass after these things, that God *did test* Abraham, and said unto him: "Abraham"; and he said: "Here-am-I" (*hineni*). And He said: "Take, *please*, thy son, *thine only son*, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering (*'olah*) upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (22:1-2; emphasis added)

We are told that this is a test, but we must ourselves decide of what. Generally and safely speaking, we may say, a test of Abraham's disposition toward God. But of *which* disposition? Contrary to many interpreters, I do not believe that this is a test either of Abraham's *obedience* or of his *faith-or-trust* in or *love* of God. For one thing, God does not exactly *command* Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, He requests it of him; as Robert Sacks points out, God says "please." (Nearly all translators fail to translate the Hebrew particle, *na*, which accompanies the verb, "take.") Thus Abraham is in fact free to refuse, as he would not be were he simply commanded to obey. Also, it is hard to see how faith-or-trust is being tested: faith or trust in what? That God will turn this awful deed into some discernible good, or, more shallowly, that He doesn't really mean it? A hardly plausible reading, for it robs the episode of its true horror. To be sure, those who, following Kierkegaard, see here only irrationality and contradiction—for how can one reconcile God's earlier promise that Isaac would carry the covenant with God's current demand for Isaac's destruction?—and who therefore insist that it is human *reason itself* whose sacrifice is being called for have no recourse but to explain Abraham's conduct as a "leap of faith." But, as I will try to argue, the request is not as "irrational" as it seems if it is considered in the context of Abraham's earlier education and not looked at only on its own.

But why should we speculate further about this, when the text itself later tells us exactly what is being tested: the depth of Abraham's awe-fear-reverence before God. When the angel of the Lord later comes to stay Abraham's hand, he praises him for having demonstrated that he is a God-fearing/God-revering man: "For now I know that thou are a God-fearing-revering man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me" (22:12). Later, perhaps, men can learn to *love* God, but it is the *fear* of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom.

The word translated fear, *yare*, means more than simple fright. In moral terms, it connotes also awe, dread, reverence; it is the primary religious passion, experienced in recognition of a form of being beyond our comprehension, of a power beyond our control, of a force before which we feel small and toward which we look up. Curiously, awe in acknowledging the gap thereby partly overcomes it: awe or reverence establishes a relationship across the unbridgeable divide. Though a disturbing passion which holds one back from the thing feared, awe also holds one fast, attracted and transfixed before it. Awe-reverence is evoked also by the voice of authority, in which we hear something compelling and powerful that commands our attention but that remains partly hidden and mysterious because we cannot take its full measure. It is thus the primary passion experienced not only before the divine, but also, at least in reverent sons and daughters, before one's father and mother: in Leviticus, when the Children of Israel are commanded to "fear every man his mother and his father. . . . I am the Lord your God" (19:3), reverence before parents and reverence before God are brought into

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explicit alignment, as they are in our present story.

Here, then, are two ways to formulate the question being asked of Abraham in this final test: Do you, Abraham, desire to walk reverently before God and to be wholehearted (or blameless or perfect) more than you desire the rewards for such conduct? Do you, Abraham, fear-and-revere God more than you love your son—and, through him, your great nation, great name, and great prosperity—and more even than you desire the covenant with God?

Horrible though it is to say so, the test God devises is perfect: For only if Abraham is willing to do without the covenant (and, indeed, is willing to destroy it himself), out of awe-reverence for the Covenantor, can he demonstrate that he *merits* the covenant and its promised rewards; only in this way can he demonstrate that he is fit for fatherhood and founding. With fear and trembling, I am suggesting (and hope to show) that, far from being irrational, this test makes pretty good sense, as a test both of the father and of the founder.

But, as Robert Sacks has astutely observed, the test is also risky, and not only on Abraham's side. Abraham could refuse God's request, producing a permanent cleavage between them; for in refusing, Abraham would demonstrate his lack of wholeheartedness, and, hence, his ultimate untrustworthiness. If God then, in reaction to such refusal, nullifies the covenant, He would in turn seem, from Abraham's point of view, to be equally untrustworthy. "In a strange way the present passage speaks more about God's faith in Abraham than Abraham's faith in God."*

God's trust in Abraham is vindicated: Abraham is ready and willing to meet the test. Not hesitating, and without saying a word (not to God,† and probably not to Sarah), Abraham "arose early in the morning," as if he were wholeheartedly in sympathy with the request. But he is no zealot, eager to practice child-sacrifice or insensitive to the horror involved; this we learn from the austere, steady, and dignified way he proceeds, as indicated by the simplicity, compactness, and austerity of the verbs used to recount his actions: he *arose, saddled* (his ass), *took* (two youths with him and Isaac his son), *cleaved* (wood for the burnt-offering), *rose up* and *went*. Of what he thought and felt on the three-day journey is left to our imagination; from the text's point of view the important thing is what he *did*: he went, and went steadily, to the place of which God had spoken.

Once there, Abraham leaves his youthful servants behind to attend to the ass and his other possessions; among other things, he wishes to spare them the horrible sight. Moreover, he understands that the affair is really only about himself, Isaac, and God, and about their interrelationships. Placing the wood upon Isaac's shoulders, taking in his own hands the fire and the knife, Abraham and Isaac ascend the mountain *together*: "and they went both of them together" [literally, "unitedly," *yachad*, from a root meaning "to be one"] (22:6).

There ensues the momentous conversation between Isaac and Abraham, the only one recorded in the Bible, a conversation that may therefore reveal the core of the relationship between father and son. Isaac breaks the tension of silence, but at the same time increases the tension both by how he speaks and by what he brings forth into articulate consciousness between them.

> And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, saying "My-father [*avi*]." And he said, "Here-am-I, my-son [*hineni beni*]." (22:7)

The three words spoken poignantly verify the paternal-filial tie; and Abraham's response means "I am fully present to you, my son"—that is, *as the father*

* Robert Sacks, "The Lion and the Ass: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis (Chapters 21-24)," *Interpretation* 10 (1):77, 1982. Mr. Sacks' remarkable commentary has been published as a single volume, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, by the Edwin Mellen Press (1991).

†Many a reader has been perplexed by the fact that Abraham does not plead with God for the life of Isaac, as he had done for the inhabitants of Sodom. But the cases are not the same, and one can give many plausible reasons for the difference (beyond the obviously wrong explanations that Abraham had faith that God would in the end spare Isaac, or that he, Abraham, had [unconscious?] desires to harm his son). First, Abraham is much less likely to plead for himself or for his own; special pleading for oneself is base, whereas Abraham aspires to be noble. Would Abraham have been deemed worthy had he said, "Why my son?" Second, because it was a request not a command, Abraham was free to refuse, and his refusal did not require any argument about the justice or injustice of the matter. Indeed, third, the issue here is clearly not one of justice. True, shedding of innocent human blood had been pronounced a capital offense (9:6), and Abraham might have thought to refuse to do the deed on those ethical grounds. But, as the question was not about reward or punishment but about a a gift or an offering, the guilt or innocence of the "victim" is beside the point (indeed, the offered one is almost invariably pure, innocent, unblemished). And if, perhaps, one still insists that some question of justice is involved, Abraham might well believe, on the basis of his conversation with God about Sodom, that God will neither ask or do anything incompatible with His justice or righteousness. Moreover, as Isaac was a wondrous gift and not a paternal possession, as God gave, so God may take back.

But even more attractive, in my view, than these plausible reasons for Abraham's silent acquiescence in the horrible request are the following: (1) Abraham had learned, in the episode over Sodom, that the pursuit of righteousness may require sacrificing your own; (2) he felt and feared both the awesome power of God and also His righteousness; and, especially, (3) he had understood immediately the meaning of the test, namely, that he was being asked to show what was first in his soul: was it the love of his own (and of the promise and the covenant) or was it the fear-awe-reverence for God? As the whole story suggests, Abraham, newly a father of the promised-son-of-the-covenant and newly the founder of a new nation, *understood* that the true father and true founder must devote his offspring and his people to something higher than offspring and peoplehood, even at the cost of losing them. I shall amplify this decisive point in the text at the end.

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you summoned. (Abraham had previously answered *hineni,* "Here I am, fully present to you," when God called him to the test; 22:1.)

> And he [Isaac] said, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering." And Abraham said, "God will provide Himself [literally, "will see-for-Himself"] the lamb for the burnt-offering, my son." And they went both of them together. (22:7-8)

Isaac asks presumably in childlike wonder; Abraham's answer gives authoritative, fatherly, and pious reassurance. Speaking better than he knows, Abraham uses Isaac's trust in his father to encourage his son's trust in God's providence. Yet Abraham does not exactly lie: for in Abraham's eyes Isaac, the sacrificial lamb, had indeed been provided by God, presumably for this purpose. The conversation produces no change in the father-son relationship: they continue to go up the mountain, both of them, united as one.

The story moves toward its climax, Abraham acting with the same simplicity, austerity, and dignity as before: he *built* (the altar), *laid* (the wood), *bound* (Isaac his son), *laid* (him on the altar, upon the wood), *stretched-forth* (his hand), *took* (the knife) to slaughter his son (22:9-10). At the last moment, the angel of the Lord calls out to him, commanding him to desist and to leave the lad untouched. The reason the angel offers for sparing Isaac is the praise of Abraham's fear-of-the-Lord which we have already discussed. At this very moment, Abraham "lift(s) up his eyes" and sees the ram caught by his horns in the thicket; Abraham takes the providentially-appearing ram and offers it as a burnt-offering in place of his son.

What follows is a new blessing bestowed by the angel upon Abraham, God's last and best blessing of the patriarch:

> "'*By Myself have I sworn*' said the Lord, '*because thou hast done this thing,* and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and *thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies*; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; *because thou has hearkened to my voice.*'" (22:16-18; emphasis added)

The image of innumerable progeny here combines the two previous ones (stars and sand), the lofty and the earthly. Also, for the first time, Abraham is told that his seed shall be victorious in wars with its enemies—which means, of course, that there will be later need for God-fearing men to sacrifice their sons, this time in battle; in the absence of fathers who are willing to pay such a price, God's way on earth cannot survive in the world against its enemies. Finally, Abraham is told that all the *nations* (cf. 12:3, "all the families") will be blessed in his seed. Why? Because he hearkened, in awe-fear-and-reverence, to the *voice of the Lord.*

In view of this expanded blessing, I feel confident in setting aside a powerful and radically alternative reading of this tale, first suggested to me in conversation by my friend and colleague, Michael Fishbane, professor of Judaica. This interpretation holds that Abraham *fails* the test, by *not* refusing God's command and by yielding instead to the all-too-human predilection for child-sacrifice and slaughter of the innocent, manifested by zealots and religious fanatics, then and now. The only possible textual basis for this reading makes much of the fact that it is an angel rather than God Himself who calls a halt to the sacrifice. God, suggests Fishbane, is so embarrassed by Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son that He refuses to speak with him directly, but sends his messenger instead. Moreover, God never speaks to Abraham again. But, as already indicated, Abraham at no time shows even a tinge of zeal or wildness; in his dealings with Isaac up to the deed itself, he shows solicitude, steadiness, and calm resolution. More important, Fishbane's sensitive account, which does justice to *our* own horror at Abraham's deed, cannot handle the manifest fact that the angel speaks for God, Who swears by Himself and Who increases Abraham's blessing as a response to his hearkening to the divine voice. Whether *we* like what Abraham did or not, we have it on the highest authority that Abraham passed the test.

If God learns about the state of Abraham's soul, Abraham—and we—learn something equally important about God. It seems that He wants dedication and reverence, not sacrifices. He is not the sort of god who wants human flesh or the sacrifice of innocent life; indeed, He here puts a curb on any such human impulse. More important, God does *not finally* require that men choose between the love of your own and godliness. Though it took a horrible episode to demonstrate this fact, harmonization is possible between a reverence for God (who loves righteousness) and the love of one's family or nation, rightly understood. God, the awesome and transcendent power, wants not the transcendence of life but rather its sanctification—in all the mundane activities and relations of everyday life. Thus, God displays Himself to be exactly the sort of god whom one could not only fear-and-revere, but even come to love—"with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

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VI. The Meaning of Fatherhood

Abraham, called by God to be the father of a new nation that will carry God's righteous ways to the rest of the world, is educated by God Himself in the proper roles of father and founder, and proves his readiness in his final test. After this, he has but a few remaining tasks to perform in order to complete his work as father-founder, after which he can quietly leave the scene. He purchases the cave at Machpelah as a burial place for Sarah, a deed simultaneously of familial and political significance; done not least for Isaac's and his descendants' sake (Abraham will also be buried here, as will Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah), the ground is consecrated as a memorial, helping to keep alive in memory the deeds of the founding mothers and fathers. Ownership of this small plot of earth will be the Children of Israel's sole legal claim in the promised land during their four hundred years of exile in Egypt. Not agriculture but burial is the first title to land. The Holy Land is holy *first* because it is the land where my fathers (and mothers) died.

The land having been sacralized in perpetuity, Abraham next completes the work of perpetuation by arranging an appropriate marriage for Isaac; no father worth his salt can be indifferent to who it is that his children marry. In Rebekah, he found more than any father of sons could ask for, a woman of worth who, even more than her husband, will be responsible for safeguarding the new way into the third generation. At age 175, his work complete, Abraham "expired, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah. . . . There was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son" (25:8-11).

Father Abraham, I submit, is the model father, both of his family and of his people—yes, even in his willingness to sacrifice his son—because he reveres God, the source of life and blessing, more than he loves his own. Truth be told, all fathers devote (that is "sacrifice") their sons to some "god" or other—to Mammon or Molech, to honor or money, pleasure or power, or, worse, to no god at all. True, they do so less visibly and less concentratedly, but they do so willy-nilly, through the things they teach and respect in their own homes; they intend that the entire life of the sons be spent in service to their own ideals or idols, and in this sense they do indeed spend the life of the children. But a *true* father will devote his son to—and will self-consciously and knowingly initiate him into—only the righteous and godly ways. He will understand that, like Abraham, only a father who feels awe before the true source can deserve the filial awe-and-reverence of his sons (cf. Noah and his sons). By showing his willingness to sacrifice what is his for what is right and good, he also puts his son on the proper road for his own adulthood—the true test of the good father. He will *not* finally love his son solely because he is *his own,* but will love only that in his son which is good and which is open to the good, including his son's own capacity for awe before the divine. In this sense at least, he is ever willing to part with his son as *his* son, recognizing him—as was Isaac, and as are indeed all children—as a gift and a blessing for God.

Just as Abraham as true father learns the limits on the love of one's own, so Abraham as the true founder learns the limits of politics and of the founder's pride. All founders, like all nations, look up to something (cf. Sodom, Babel); a *true* founder will know from the start that there is something higher than founding and higher than politics, in the light of which one should found. Accordingly, he will strive to devote the nation or the polity to what is truly highest. Righteous politics requires not only a desire for greatness, but a willingness to subordinate that desire to the source of righteousness, in which subordination is true greatness to be found.* Finally, the true founder knows and accepts the fact that his innocent sons *will suffer* for the sake of the righteous community and that their "sacrifice" is no proof that they are not properly loved as sons. On the contrary, the true founder, like the true father, shows his love for his followers when he teaches them, often by example, that one's life is not worth living if there is nothing worth dying for.

I am almost at the end. But, I must confess, I have utterly neglected one vexing question: Isaac. I have considered the story solely from Abraham's point of view. But fatherhood is not fatherhood without "sonship," and we must in closing—and in honesty—cast a short look at what Isaac may have felt, and learned, during *his* ordeal. For it would be a tragic and self-defeating result if Abraham proved himself a worthy father only at the price of his son's alienation. Is it possible that Abraham (like Noah in his tent) un-fathered himself on Mount Moriah?

On the surface, there is no apparent rupture on the mountain. Isaac does not resist being bound, Isaac does not struggle, Isaac does not even cry out. Isaac, it seems, is complicitous in his own sacrifice. Yet a closer look shows that his relation to his father is indeed broken as a result. Although going up the mountain, as the narrator stressed twice, "they went *both of them together,*" at the end of the story, the narrator reports pointedly, "*Abraham* returned unto his youths, and *they* rose up and *went together* to Beer-sheba; and *Abraham* dwelt at Beer-sheba" (22:19;

*As Sacks points out, the ram who served as a substitute for Isaac is throughout the Bible an image of the ruler, his horns an image of his pride and lofty aspiration. Symbolically, the ruler is here trapped by his pride and ambition; he must, like the one who would be a true ruler, be dedicated to God.

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emphasis added). Isaac does not go down the mountain with his father; Abraham now goes alone, leaving his son to fend for himself. Moreover, Isaac and Abraham will not appear together again (in the text) until Isaac and Ishmael come to bury Abraham. And Isaac is explicitly said to be grieved by the death of his mother, Sarah, not by the death of his father. One might go so far as to suggest that this "trauma" at the hands of his father explains Isaac's subsequent shortcomings as a father of his own sons, Esau and Jacob, including his preference for the strong, ruddy, earthy, present-centered hunter, Esau (whom Isaac loved, we are told, because he loved to eat of his venison), and his apparent indifference to the paternal work of transmission. Everything points to the fact that Isaac—like so many of us sons—neither understood nor approved of what his father did or stood for; and, you might wish to add, in Isaac's case for good reason.

But if we are lucky to live long enough, many of us discover that our parents get smarter as we get older, especially if we are blessed with children of our own to rear. They were right, our parents, when they said to us, "Just you wait until you have children! Then you'll see." Why we cannot learn by being told and while we live under their rule is a long question; but, for most of us, we must separate ourselves from our parents in order to learn the hard way, before we can, in returning, step up to take their place. This, I believe, happens also to Isaac, albeit late in his life.

It happens at the moment when Isaac discovers that he has been fooled by Jacob into giving him the blessing he had intended for Esau. This revelation suddenly brings Isaac to his senses. Remarkably, he is not angry but rather awe-struck: "And Isaac trembled with an exceedingly great trembling" (27:33), as if he sensed that the blessing had been given through him to the proper son, by powers beyond his control. As he had said, prophetically but unwittingly, when he sent Esau out at the start of this episode, *he* would eat but *his soul* would bless (27:4)—and so it happened. Despite himself, something that was living in him and through him gave the blessing to the son for whom it was suited; note that in doing so he metaphorically sacrificed *his* favorite son! No wonder he trembled: O my God! Is this what my father suffered and understood and felt on Mount Moriah?

In the immediate sequel, Isaac on his own initiative calls, blesses, and, for the first time, *commands* Jacob—not to take a Canaanite wife but to find one at the ancestral home of his mother, Rebekah. Continuing (and these are the last words and the last deed of Isaac in the Bible), Isaac bestows on Jacob—fully and freely—the Abrahamic blessing, the proper blessing of the sons of the covenant:

> "And God Almighty will bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be an assembly of peoples; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest possess the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham." (28:3-4)

Isaac, stepping forward into the paternal role, at long last fulfills his mission as patriarch. The last word we hear from Isaac's lips is the name of Abraham, his father and ours. FT

Gifted

(Psalm 21)

The haves shall have and have more
Than they ask, will live a long time,
Winter in palm sunshine,
Watch herons fish the squall line
And be neither fish, nor fowl, but eye,
A cup to taste immensity.

The others drink December polar murk.
They listen for the furnace switch, the pilot
Light, hot water pump: the damned could stick
No closer to their fires. Outside, the wind
Drives a person back into himself, where
All he knows is what he has imagined.

Laurance Wieder

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Re-Viewing Vatican II: An Interview with George A. Lindbeck

George Weigel

George Lindbeck, the distinguished Lutheran theologian, served from 1962 through 1965 as one of sixty "Delegated Observers" from other Christian communions at the Second Vatican Council. As Lindbeck has noted on previous occasions, the ecumenical observers from the worlds of Orthodoxy and Protestantism were a "privileged lot." They had special access to the Council aula, *sat just to the left of the high altar of St. Peter's, were served by a corps of ecumenically minded Catholic translators (all Council business was conducted in Latin), and were frequently consulted, formally and informally, about the drafts of conciliar texts. More than one bishop was heard to complain, and perhaps not without reason, that the* observatores *had gotten a much better deal than the bishops who, after all, were supposed to* be *the Council.*

It has now been twenty-nine years since Vatican II finished its business, and the ranks of those with living memories of the Council is, in the natural course of things, growing ever thinner. Concurrently, debates over the Council's intention, its accomplishment, and its "spirit" have intensified, within and beyond the formal boundaries of Roman Catholicism. It was with an eye to clarifying some of the terms of the contemporary debate, by reference to one keen observer's experience of the actual proceedings, that I recently spoke at length with George Lindbeck about his memories of Vatican II.

Weigel: How did you happen to spend the better part of three years working at and on the Second Vatican Council?

Lindbeck: Before the Council started, Pope John XXIII invited each of the world confessional organizations to delegate three official observers who would attend the Council. The Lutheran World Federation was one of those organizations; the United States was, in those days, the major source of funding for the LWF; so the LWF authorities in Geneva decided that they had to name an American as one of the three delegated observers. The American would have to know Latin, German, and French, would have to have had some experience of Roman Catholic theology, and, perhaps hardest of all, would have to get a leave of absence from his regular job. They scraped and scraped the barrel, and at the bottom there was an untenured Yale teacher whose dean and department were not bound by the draconian faculty employment rules now in effect.

So I was named the junior member of the Lutheran delegation, and as it happened, I was the only one assigned full-time to Council business between the sessions of the Council which, as you remember, took place in the fall months of the years 1962-1965. I actually lived in Rome with my family from 1962 to 1964, but my responsibilities were such that I had to go to Helsinki to brief the LWF Assembly, to Montreal for a meeting of Faith and Order, to Scandinavia, Germany, France, and all the countries of Latin America where there was a Lutheran presence.

As things worked out, I ended up doing even more liaison work than had been anticipated. I became the Protestant observers' link to Latin American bishops at the Council who spoke French but had neither German nor English. Then there were the Hispanic Protestants and the Italian Waldensians, who evidently found non-Catholic observers a less neuralgic means of communicating with the Catholic bishops of their own countries. It also worked the other way; I remember that the French Dominicans in Oslo helped me bridge the communication gap between local Lutheran groups who were shunning each other.

It was, as you can imagine, a very heady experience. It made a great difference to have my wife, Violette, and our small daughter with me during the two years I lived in Rome. Kristen, my daughter, was regularly entertained by various ecclesiastical notables, and my wife had an entree to that vast world of nuns

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that was in fact much more influential than many observers realized. We did a fair amount of entertaining, even though LWF emoluments were not, shall we say, excessive. Indeed, one of my favorite Council memories is of Cardinal Willebrands (who was then Bishop Willebrands and second-in-command to Cardinal Bea at the Secretariat for Christian Unity) and my wife smoking Willebrands' excellent Dutch cigars together after dinner.

Weigel: Let's talk a bit about the theological dynamics within Roman Catholicism just before the Council. In his book on Henri de Lubac, the distinguished French scholar, the late great Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar cites de Lubac's striking reflection on the intention and the fate of the postwar French phenomenon, *la nouvelle théologie.* According to de Lubac, he, Yves Congar, and a group of others intended to produce a comprehensive theological work "that would have been less systematic than the manuals but more saturated with tradition, integrating the valid elements in the results of modern exegesis, of patristics, liturgy, history, philosophical reflection. . . ." But before the work could really get going in earnest, "the lightning bolt of *Humani Generis* (1950) killed the project." To what extent did the confrontation between *la nouvelle théologie,* on the one hand, and the forces that produced *Humani Generis* on the other, set the theological (and in some sense "political") background to the Council? And how did that confrontation shape the standard "liberal/conservative" hermeneutic of the Council?

Lindbeck: I think you have to go back further than *la nouvelle théologie.* From my point of view—which was that of a non-Catholic, interested in medieval thought and Thomas Aquinas—the Catholic anti-Modernist campaign of the early twentieth century had created a situation in which a very rigid and biased interpretation of Thomas, stemming in part from the seventeenth and in part from the nineteenth centuries, had become virtually a binding commitment on Catholic theology and philosophy departments throughout the world, and was very influential as well in the Roman congregations. So the real issue was the confrontation with Modernism. And anyone who wasn't a "neo-scholastic," in the sense in which the anti-Modernists had defined neo-scholasticism, was looked on with suspicion. Congar, de Lubac, von Balthasar, and Karl Rahner—the currently most influential Roman Catholic theologian—were different people, working on different projects; but what they had in common was that they were saying things in a different form from that of the official neo-scholasticism, and that brought them under suspicion. Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson were breaking new ground, too, but they were laymen, and in any case Gilson was an historian, not a philosopher, so he didn't quite "count."

Humani Generis was intended to say "No" to the sorts of approaches represented by *la nouvelle théologie,* but it was modified, according to de Lubac, who had a letter from John XXIII on this, stating that Pius XII had himself altered elements in *Humani Generis* that were directly critical of the kind of work de Lubac was doing. So in fact the encyclical did not directly chastise de Lubac or von Balthasar, although Rahner's failure to reaffirm monogenesis would have come under the encyclical's list of proscribed opinions. As a general rule, then, the real problem with *Humani Generis* was the way it reinforced the position of the regnant powers in the congregations and the academy, who used the encyclical to make the *nouvelle théologie* people personae non gratae. Which meant that the encyclical reinforced the anti-Modernist style of dealing with exploratory theology.

Weigel: Speaking of Rahner, do you know the wonderful story about one of his encounters in the 1950s with Cardinal Ottaviani [the prefect of the Holy Office]? According to an autobiographical interview Rahner gave toward the end of his life, Ottaviani once took Rahner aside during the Council and told him, "Well, we have absolutely nothing against you. You see, this extraordinary Roman censor [who had been imposed on Rahner by the Holy Office] is a special privilege by which we wish to protect you from the misunderstandings of dumb friends." To which Rahner remembered saying, "Your Eminence, I renounce privileges."

In any case, would you make the linkage between the *nouvelle théologie* project and its strategy of *ressourcement* ("back to the sources"), and the *aggiornamento* ("updating") thrust of the Council?

Lindbeck: The *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* people at the Council thought of themselves as collaborators. *Ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* were understood to be two dimensions of the same reality. But the dimension labelled *"aggiornamento"* could be used in a program of *accommodation* to the modern world, rather than one of *an opening* to the modern world; and when that happened, *aggiornamento* fell into opposition to *ressourcement.* But in my memory of the Council, there was absolutely no tension between the two, with the exception of the debate over what became the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

And here it was the non-Catholics—especially the Lutherans, and not least Edmund Schlink, the observer from the German Evangelical Church—who had some serious reservations about the positive way in which the document talked about the world. But he was speaking from a specifically Reformation perspective, and was not at all in sympathy with the political rightists' critique of the document. About the *ressourcement* dimension of the Council, though, Schlink was enthusiastic.

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Weigel: Speaking of politics, how much of the venomous character of the controversy between the *nouvelle théologie* people and their critics in France had to do with the fact that the former had a rather more positive view of the Fourth Republic, indeed of democracy, than the latter?

Lindbeck: There is some fascinating history waiting to be written here. You'd be sitting around drinking wine with the French, and just as you pierced the surface, they'd start talking about *Action Française* and all that. The French allies of the curial party, the French integralists, were more likely to have been in sympathy with *Action Française*, which the *nouvelle théologie* people never were. By and large, most of the integralists had not been sympathetic to the Resistance during the war, as de Lubac and others in his group had been.

So there was this deep personal estrangement between the *nouvelle théologie* people and their critics, who believed that they had betrayed true French Catholicism, understood in monarchist terms. De Lubac illustrated the intensity of it when he quoted a critic of his to the effect that John XXIII had chosen Congar and de Lubac for the conciliar preparatory commissions because the Pope was wise enough to remember what had happened after Vatican I (1870), when the "old Catholic" schism occurred, and wanted to make sure that dissidents didn't leave the Church this time around.

Weigel: So in that specific French sense, the pre-conciliar conflict goes back even further than the Modernist crisis, and reflects the fault line that runs through French society from 1789 on?

Lindbeck: I always found it desirable at any dinner party to find out where people stood on the Revolution before getting into any other discussion.

Weigel: Given that the *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* people saw themselves at the Council as two dimensions of one enterprise, how are we to assess the image of the council as a grand struggle between "liberals" and "conservatives?" What did that imagery capture, and what did it miss?

Lindbeck: The crucial question was how people reacted to the pre-conciliar drafts of the proposed Council documents, which had been drawn up entirely by the curial party. People like Congar and de Lubac warned the preparatory commissions that these drafts—especially on the Church and on revelation—simply wouldn't work. And rumors began to circulate among the bishops that John XXIII didn't like the tone of the drafts, that they were too negative. It wasn't that he had any disagreements with them doctrinally, but that he wanted a more positive presentation of Catholic truth, not condemnations of errors. The Pope had told the preparatory commissions that he didn't want any condemnations, and they had simply interpreted this to mean no formal anathemas. And so when the bishops by and large found themselves put off by the rhetoric, they knew they would have the backing of the Pope if they demanded something different.

Weigel: If these documents by the preparatory commissions were distributed before the Council convened, then can we say that there was a countercurrent building even before the Council?

Lindbeck: Yes, including, massively, people who by all the formal theological criteria would be in agreement with the integralists. But they didn't like the tone; it wasn't tactful. So even at the beginning there were only a few bishops who were actively in favor of the documents as written by the preparatory commissions—which accounts for the huge and crucial rejection, in an early vote, of the preparatory commissions' lists for members of the actual conciliar commissions.

Now there was no clear agreement on what the preparatory commissions' documents should be replaced with. An awful lot of bishops would have been happy with just a change in tone. So then a struggle ensued between the curial bureaucracy and the non-bureaucrats, so to speak, on the revision of the documents. In fact, and although I hadn't thought of this before, I think "Xavier Rynne" [Francis X. Murphy, C.SS.R.], whose reports in the *New Yorker* and later in books shaped many perceptions of the Council, didn't make enough of this aspect of bureaucracy vs. non-bureaucracy.

Weigel: I've often wondered about that—whether what was perceived as a massive theological shift wasn't at least in part simply a very human reaction against the curial bureaucracy that had increasingly muscled the bishops around during the later years of Pius XII.

Lindbeck: That was certainly part of it, but you also have to remember that the campaign against de Lubac and people like him wasn't simply bureaucratic. The charge was that these were people who were toying with Modernism, and "Modernism" was too often used as a label to dismiss something you didn't agree with. This made people who didn't want to be perceived as sympathetic to Modernists very cautious.

Weigel: So the vote on the conciliar commissions really did break a psychological barrier, such that it was possible to talk with people and about people in a way that hadn't been possible before?

Lindbeck: And "Rynne" did capture that dimension of the Council, especially in his book *Letters from Vatican City*. But I would also, today, criticize his

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(and others') tendency to demonize the opposition. Ottaviani, to go back to your example, was, according to people who knew him, really a very good person who did his job humanely; but this was hard to remember if one disagreed with him on structural and policy issues. Polarization, to be sure, makes for excitement. The critique of the Holy Office by Cardinal Frings, head of the German bishops' conference, and Cardinal Ottaviani's impassioned defense of the curia as servants of the Pope, made for one of the Council's most dramatic moments.

Another moment of real tension occurred on October 29, 1963, and it involved what we might call "Marian maximalism," an issue that has so completely disappeared in the past decades that it may seem utterly antiquarian to some people today. This was not simply a Protestant concern, of course; years later, in his *Theo-Dramatic*, von Balthasar wrote critically of the tendency in some pre-conciliar Catholic circles to juxtapose Mary's "almighty power of mercy . . . over against the Son's almighty power and wrath," to the point where Mary was, for some, "divinized . . . 'supplementing the Trinity.'" In any event, for the kind of Lutheran I am, this was much more troubling than the papacy, and I think the same was true of my fellow-Lutheran observers. Thus from our point of view a crucial ecumenical-theological moment was reached when, in the closest vote of the Council (1,114-1,074), the Council fathers agreed to place their discussion of the Virgin Mary within the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), rather than in a separate decree.

It's strange to think that von Balthasar, not least in view of his critique of Marian maximalism, was once thought of as on the far left instead of on the far right, where some try to locate him now. *Ressourcement*, it seems, leads to the margins—or to martyrdom. The miracle of the Council is that the conjunction of forces was such that an authentic return to the sources could, for a moment, capture the center.

There was still another personal dynamic at work in the Council that may help account for that "conjunction of forces," and I can illustrate it by a vignette. At a reception at the American Embassy, which was one of the places where everybody congregated, I got to talking with Archbishop McGucken of San Francisco. He was one of many bishops who admitted to never having talked with a Protestant theologian before, and he was curious about my reactions to the Council. I said that from the point of view of a Lutheran observer, *Dei Verbum* (the Constitution on Divine Revelation) had been of particular importance, and I asked him what his attitude toward that, and to the related controversies over biblical scholarship, had been. He replied that he had studied under [Cardinal Ernesto] Ruffini, and that he tended to share Ruffini's dour views of current developments in biblical scholarship. But then he went on to say that he had been to six or eight different seminars led for the bishops by Father Barnabas Ahern, precisely on the new approaches to the Bible. "Marvelously saintly man, isn't he?" McGucken said. "Do you know if he ever gives retreats for clergy? I think I might ask him to give a retreat to my priests." And that experience of Ahern was why McGucken said he had voted against Ruffini and for *Dei Verbum* when that crucial document was on the agenda.

Weigel: Did you have the sense that John XXIII had a well-formulated idea of what the Council should and should not do?

Lindbeck: My contacts with him were limited to a couple of sessions he had with the observers. I can simply report the general feeling that John XXIII genuinely believed in the Holy Spirit's guidance of the Council. He was open to being surprised.

Weigel: Did you have the impression that John XXIII had been much influenced by the French conflicts we were discussing a moment ago? Did Cardinal Roncalli come to the papacy convinced that this sixty-year struggle with Modernism (which, in one sense, was simply a code-word for "modernity" in the larger sense) had to be overcome?

Lindbeck: To a remarkable degree, it seems that as one gets to know previously unknown things about John XXIII the picture of him really doesn't change. What he said publicly during his pontificate seems to hold up when one probes beneath the surface. He wanted more ecumenism and he wanted more openness to the modern world and he wanted more *ressourcement*. He said those things, and he quite evidently meant all three. But about what that meant in precise detail he apparently did not have any clear-cut ideas.

Weigel: And, presumably, he didn't worry all that much about it. Which was really an act of faith. It wasn't a sociological judgment about the stability of the Church in the mid-twentieth century, it was an act of faith in the Spirit's presence to the Church.

Lindbeck: I suppose that, speculatively, you could connect his experiences as nuncio in France with the Council, in that John XXIII wanted a Church that had a good degree of openness, so that there could be frank and free discussion without politically correct terrorists frightening people. But that, you see, is a desire to establish an openness that would make real conversation possible. And while it fits in with the Pope's character, it's also hard to make into a program.

Weigel: And then John XXIII was succeeded by a man who worried about all the fine print and how the program was going to work out.

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Lindbeck: And who was self-consciously committed to the kind of theology that had been previously designated *la nouvelle théologie*. As far as I know, nobody suggested that John XXIII had a very clear idea what *la nouvelle théologie* was.

Weigel: How deep a grasp did Paul VI have of the *nouvelle théologie* project?

Lindbeck: He said that Congar was his favorite theologian, and while I'm no expert on Montini, I'd be surprised if the documentation didn't suggest that he had an intimate and deep knowledge of Congar and de Lubac.

Weigel: Would you say something about the unintended consequences of the Council: within Roman Catholicism, between Catholicism and other Christian communions, and between the Church and the world?

Lindbeck: Among the observers, there was a virtually universal agreement that we disagreed with the conventional notion of the Roman Catholic Church as a monolith, an army that never breaks ranks, with commands being obeyed from the top down, and so forth. And yet, however much we *thought* we disagreed with that view, we basically still thought that that was what the Roman Catholic Church was! And that affected the degree to which we were optimistic about the changes. As for me, I expected a gradual change guided by directives from Rome, a process in which everything would run relatively smoothly, in what my colleagues and I agreed was a very good direction.

This was, obviously, very naive. It was sociologically naive, psychologically naive, organizationally naive; and above all, what embarrasses me about my optimism is how unhistorical it was, because every major council in the past has been followed by disturbances. In fact, Vatican I, which probably colored our expectations, had fewer than most, and even then there was a period of turmoil that was stopped only by the condemnation of Modernism.

So many of the consequences were unintended, with one notable exception. What happened in the official ecumenical dialogues was very much what we had hoped for. But the context changed so much, and so many other things were happening that were ecumenically counterproductive, that the effect of the major dialogues has not been what we had hoped for. Still, the dialogues themselves followed a pattern that we had foreseen.

Weigel: By the end of the Council, was there an expectation that the ecumenical follow-through to Vatican II could in fact heal the breach of the sixteenth century?

Lindbeck: The official dialogues with which I've been most involved are the ones concerned with the present status of what historically have been divisive doctrinal disagreements. On the basis of an enormous amount of scholarship that had already been done, and given the results of the dialogues themselves, it seemed to those of us who had been involved in these dialogues that it ought to be possible on both sides to say that none of these disagreements need necessarily be ecclesially divisive. Now the circumstances that would make reunion possible had to do with much more than the discovery that these doctrines could be understood, without betraying one's own heritage, in ways that were not church-dividing.

We learned a lot as time went on. And while we were never naive enough to think that that agreement was all that was needed, we did think that a meeting of minds on the sixteenth-century conflicts, in discussions that were sponsored by churches on both sides, would make more difference ecumenically than in fact it has. We thought, in other words, that specifically historical doctrinal issues were more decisive than they proved to be.

The agreements we reached are, of course, one of the conditions for reunion. And so, while I have no idea when this progress will contribute in substantial ways to the reunion of the churches, I find myself feeling a great sense of satisfaction that that job is in large part done.

Weigel: Let's go back for a moment to the debate over the famous "Schema Thirteen," which became *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Did it have too sanguine a reading of late modernity?

Lindbeck: At the time, I tended to agree with Edmund Schlink that the document's reading of the world was too optimistic. He was a German theologian who ha ' lived through the Hitler period and been deeply involved in the Confessing Church struggle against the pro-Nazi "German Christians," and he was not at all sure that the rest of the West was immune from crises as severe as Germany had gone through. Moreover, and here we are on a different, although related, track, he formally rejected the legitimacy of what he regarded as Teilhard de Chardin's "Christianizing" of evolution, both in itself and in its implications of an open-ended human progress.

If I remember my discussions with Schlink correctly, I defended *Gaudium et Spes* on the grounds that it was a necessary corrective in the Catholic context, and that looking at it from a Reformation perspective was unfair because the whole nature-grace schema in Catholic theology lent itself to these kinds of formulations much better than did Reformation evaluations.

So while Schlink had theological reservations, I had reservations about the document's opportuneness. I was already pessimistic about the state of the

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world. The sixties were already upon us; you could see 1968 coming in 1965.

Weigel: Did you have much contact with John Courtney Murray at the Council?

Lindbeck: I had a lot of contact with Murray over the years. I had been his teaching assistant when he was at Yale, so we talked a great deal then. The chances to talk to him at the Council were not leisurely ones, and if I remember correctly, all of our exchanges were on *Dignitatis Humanae* (the Declaration on Religious Freedom). I recall his being concerned that the French way of arguing from New Testament materials to the neglect of natural law considerations would hinder the Church's ability to speak to the world at large, and also that it lacked a certain conceptual rigor. He approved in principle of the retrieval of biblical and patristic language in the conciliar documents, but worried that, given the lack of a necessary intellectual rigor, these documents would be too ambiguous and susceptible to many different interpretations.

Weigel: Was *Dignitatis Humanae* ecumenically important in 1965?

Lindbeck: It was absolutely essential from the point of view of relations between churches. But it was not a matter on which the delegated observers had any great input. This was something that the Catholics were obviously going to solve in their own way, but it was also something that all the historic churches had been through, so we didn't think of religious freedom and the disentangling of the Church from state power as a specifically Catholic problem.

Weigel: And yet, as things turned out, in terms of the reception of the Council within the Catholic Church, *Dignitatis Humanae* became an enormous point of fissure, as with the Lefebvrists [a later arch-conservative—and strongly anti-conciliar—movement led by Archbishop Lefebvre]. If what the Church teaches is eternally true, then how, they asked, could it now affirm a liberty it had before denied?

Lindbeck: The larger issue was the development of doctrine: Lefebvre, in effect, denies its possibility and therefore rejects the Council. But that question was engaged in other conciliar documents, and not simply in *Dignitatis Humanae*. As for *Dignitatis Humanae*, it may well be that Murray had argued the case so well in his pre-conciliar writings that most Council participants did not need to be convinced. It was just a matter of explaining to people how the issue could be managed.

Weigel: How has the Council had an impact on non-Catholic theological circles?

Lindbeck: My impression is that the deepest impact, de facto and probably also formally, has been via liberation theology. Catholic liberation theology has acquired many Protestant fellow-travellers, and when the liberationist Catholics cite the Council, these citations also get taken up by non-Catholics. Which means that the progressivists' view of the Council dominates among non-Catholics. Among specialists, there is a fairly widespread awareness of what the Council said, based on a certain amount of actual reading of the texts. But outside specialist circles it has largely been a question of interest groups, as with liberation theology. Both the ecumenists and the anti-ecumentists cite the Council to show how, from their respective points of view, things have changed immensely or really haven't changed at all. The interest-group or polemical use of the Council is dominant among non-Catholics as well as Catholics, and is found not only on the left but sometimes on the right as well.

Weigel: Let's talk a bit about Pope John Paul II as an implementor of Vatican II. He said at the very beginning of his pontificate that its main thrust would be the full implementation of the Council, and he constantly refers to conciliar documents in his own work. One of the striking things about the moral encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, I thought, was the number of citations in it from *Gaudium et Spes*.

Lindbeck: I must confess that I'm much more familiar with Cardinal Ratzinger's implementation of the Council, so perhaps I could talk about that. Ratzinger's general interpretation of the Council seems to me to have been what a responsible official committed to the Council would do. That is to say, one can't follow the "spirit" of the documents; one has to follow what they actually say.

However, and in the areas with which I'm most familiar, it does seem to me that the present polarization in the Roman Catholic Church has led Ratzinger to interpret the Council in ways that it need not be interpreted in order to say "No" to what he perceives as abuses within the Roman Catholic Church. I'm thinking in particular here of his interpretation of the Council's teaching in *Lumen Gentium* that the Church of Christ "subsists in" the Roman Catholic Church.

According to your namesake, Father Gustave Weigel (who was the American at the Council most deeply appreciated by the observers), the question of the exact boundaries of the Church of Christ was deliberately left less well determined than in the more exclusive boundary-language of *Mystici Corporis*, by the deliberate choice of the phrase, *subsistet in*. So the problem with Ratzinger's interpretation, as I see it, is that it makes one possible interpretation of the

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Council into a definitive statement of the Council's commitment. There are some things that the Council deliberately, and wisely, left ambiguous.

Weigel: What do you think is the problem that Cardinal Ratzinger is intending to resolve by his interpretation of *subsistet in*?

Lindbeck: Well, I suppose it's a kind of Catholic ecumenism that is indifferent to the historic Roman Catholic claim that the fullness of the Church includes the structures of episcopacy and papacy.

Weigel: And perhaps, more generally, a kind of ecclesiological insouciance in some parts of the Catholic world?

Lindbeck: Yes. What I mentioned would be a specific instance of that insouciance. And if it weren't for that indifference, I think the question of structures would be moot, since there are several conciliar documents that note the God-given and permanent character of these structures. So you don't need to get them out of *subsistet in*.

I would think that Ratzinger's ecumenical views are also weighted by his disappointments with what has happened on the non-Catholic side. He clearly wants to avoid a doctrinal permissiveness that implies that church doctrine is unimportant, or a kind of pluralism that makes all churches doctrinally equal. He insists that this is not the way to read the Council. And I wouldn't disagree with that.

My guess is that Ratzinger thinks the time is not ripe for a definitive ecumenical articulation as long as the Roman Catholics don't have their house in better order and as long as non-Roman Catholics are incapable of communally authoritative teaching or decisions. This is my own interpretation, to be sure, but I think his view is that as long as the churches on both sides are in such immense disarray, the time for clarity about "reunion" has not arrived.

Weigel: Does the degree of that disarray surprise you?

Lindbeck: I've gotten used to it. It began to strike me with full force in the early 1970s, although if I'd been living in France it would have hit me in the late 1960s. But I've gotten over the astonishment.

I think we've all tended to forget that the Council occurred in what was, in retrospect, a remarkably calm moment in the history of the Western churches. The defeat of theological liberalism, the triumph of a return to the historical doctrinal commitments of the Church represented by neo-orthodoxy and by a renewed emphasis on the Confessions in churches like the Lutheran: this was not yet being challenged at the time of the Council. The resurgence of historic faith that came in response to Nazism looked as if it were definitive. But now it seems as if this was a relatively temporary interval that was made possible precisely by the fact that it was the orthodox, so to speak, who had stood up against the Nazis. In sum, the de-Christianization of Western culture, the kind of de-Christianization that was also undermining the faith of the Church in its tradition, was not really interrupted.

The timing of the Council also affected ecumenical relations. The leaders on both sides of the ecumenical dialogue had been formed, so to speak, by the experience of the Second World War, which had in fact accelerated or intensified their interest in ecumenism. For it was under the stress of Hitler that they had come to find each other as fellow Christians rather than as "Protestants" or "Catholics." Among the ecumenists from Germany at the Council there weren't any Bonhoeffers; yet many of them had, at considerable cost, been in the quiet Resistance, even if they had not suffered in any dramatic fashion. Nevertheless they felt guilty for not having resisted more. The French had had a similar, though often more active, experience with the Resistance, and it really meant something, in those days, to say that "what brings us together is Jesus Christ."

I think that among the observers we also admired Roman Catholic theologians who had been stepped on by the ecclesiastical authorities before the Council, but who had not complained, had not gone public, but just continued doing their work to the best of their ability out of love for the Church.

We haven't talked very much about major public events at the Council, so perhaps I could tell a story that illustrates the intensity of the sense of ecumenical encounter during those years. Archbishop Elchinger of Strasbourg gave a speech in St. Peter's on how much Catholics owe non-Catholics even in matters of faith. One example was biblical scholarship. But then he talked about the central "dogma of justification by faith"—first "defined," as he put it, when the Jerusalem Council (as is reported in the Book of Acts and in Galatians) exempted Gentile Christians from circumcision and full Torah observance—that had at times been better maintained outside of than within Roman Catholicism. If Catholics were now rediscovering it, he said, this was largely because of the ecclesial communities that had been born in the sixteenth-century Reformation.

And at those words, to my surprise, I began to cry. I remembered the reports from Vatican I of what had happened when Bishop Strossmeyer had said that there were millions of Protestants who truly loved the Lord Jesus; the cries of "heresy" and "blasphemy" got so loud that he was forced to leave the podium. The contrast between then and now was what made tears of joy roll down my cheeks. And I think that is the only time I have wept in public except at funerals. FT

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Books In Review

After Modernity, What?

Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture. By Gene Edward Veith, Jr. *Crossway. 234 pp. $11.99.*

Reviewed by **Wilfred M. McClay**

We acquire language through repetition, and in everyday life the repetition of a word helps fix its meaning. But not always. Especially not in the academic world, where the most intense intellectual commerce often involves exchanging, and haggling over, the semantic equivalent of wooden nickels—words like "alienation," "diversity," "values," "hegemony," "social democracy," and so on.

One such term that has been coming on strong in recent years is "postmodernism." It is hard to think of a term in the lexicon of contemporary intellectual fashion, with the possible exception of "multiculturalism," that is more elusive. Yet the sprawling vagueness of such a term, like the sprawling vagueness of *Finnegans Wake,* seems only to augment its market value in the strange world of academic discourse. When William James asserted that we ought to judge our ideas by their "cash value," he was perhaps saying more than he knew. He could not have guessed how soft the currency would eventually become and how well the signifiers would float.

Still, whatever the reasons for their suddenly ubiquitous use, the terms "postmodern" and "postmodernism" do seem to point toward something real, something that is changing dramatically about our world; and it is one of the considerable virtues of Gene Edward Veith's *Postmodern Times* that it undertakes to formulate, with great clarity and accessibility, what that "something" is. Veith is careful to distinguish between the two terms. The assertion that we live in postmodern times, with which Veith agrees, does not automatically commit us to accepting the secular ideology of postmodern*ism,* which he largely rejects. He goes on to argue that the questions engaged by his book are not merely philosophical, in the narrow use of that term. Indeed, the repercussions of postmodernity, far from being confined to those arenas in which rarefied academic debate takes place, are felt throughout the culture, and are already powerfully manifest, not only in art, politics, literature, architecture, popular entertainment, and law, but in the very rhythm and texture of ordinary Americans' lives. Even in the Church, particularly the evangelical Protestant wing that makes up much of Veith's intended audience, the disturbing effects of the postmodern perplex are beginning to show.

Such a holistic and comprehensive approach to culture invites comparison with the idiosyncratic work of the late Francis A. Schaeffer, who similarly liked to meld haute intellectual history with pop culture criticism in his comparative studies of rival worldviews. Such an approach always draws detractors. It has proved easy for conventional scholars to poke holes in Schaeffer's analyses, which, though often brilliant, are also admittedly haphazard in method, and often greatly oversimplify and overschematize their subjects. Even so, his works have endured, and proved suggestive and valuable, precisely because they address the profound issues that cul-

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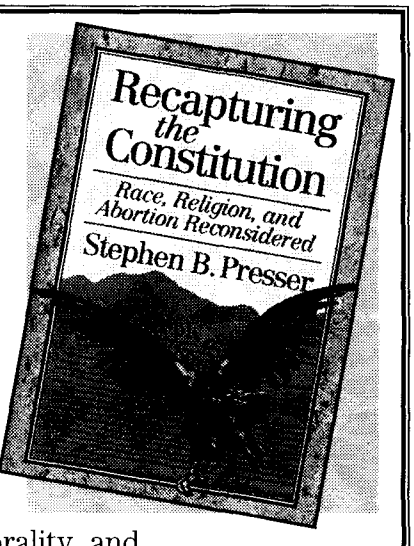

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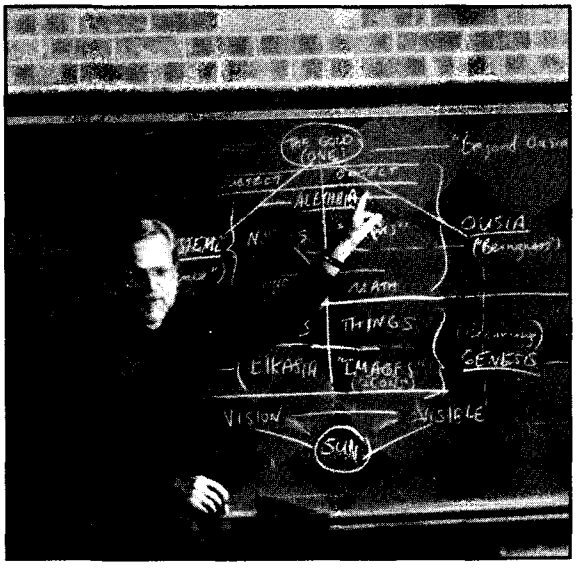
tural historians are almost congenitally unable to deal with. And in its insistence upon the profound cultural consequences that flow from our most basic shared intellectual premises, Schaeffer's work shows a high regard for the power of foundational ideas.

Veith, who is a Missouri Synod Lutheran (and Professor of English at Concordia University in Wisconsin), has produced in *Postmodern Times* a more refined and cautious, but no less suggestive, contribution to the Schaeffer tradition of theologically informed cultural analysis. Hence, although the book will certainly be of interest to scholars, its subtitle suggests a different audience: reflective Protestants who want to understand what the apparent collapse of modernism may mean for the culture, for the Church, and for themselves as Christians.

Veith's answer to these concerns is optimistic, but very cautiously so. The modernist worldview, with its "totalized" enlightened faith in secular, rationalistic, naturalistic, materialistic, and demystified modes of explanation for all things, has by and large been the sworn enemy of Christian orthodoxy. So modernism's slow but inexorable loss of authority at the hands of physicists, philosophers of science, literary theorists, and others would seem to be a welcome development. But Veith warns that the secular ideology of postmod*ern*ism will eventually be every bit as hostile to Christianity as modernism was, and perhaps more so. Why? Because Christians have one thing in common with modernists: both believe in the possibility of intelligible absolute truths. Therefore both are guilty, in the eyes of postmodernists, of the sin of "universal or totalizing discourse," the distrust of which is the hallmark of postmodernism.

SINCE IT DEFINES itself by opposition, postmodernism is best described—indeed, can only be described—by a series of antitheses. Where modernists believed in determinacy, postmodernists embrace indeterminacy. Where modernists value synthesis and comprehensiveness, postmodernists value deconstruction and fragmentation. Where modernists value the type, postmodernists emphasize the deviant. Where modernists esteem a personal ideal of responsible agency and integrity, postmodernists reject "the authentic self" as an illusion, an attempt to reify a mere collocation and ensemble of social roles. Where modernists esteem the work of art as a serious, self-contained, absolute, and finished work, produced by an autonomous creative artist, postmodernists emphasize art as an arena of playfulness, irony, referentiality, process, performance, and incompleteness, in which the audi-



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ence participates in the creation of meaning. Where modernists think foundationally, and believe objective truths can be discovered, postmodernists think anti-foundationally. They believe that truths are constructed by social groups and their languages; dismiss science and philosophy as totalizing "metanarratives"; and view history as nothing more than "a network of agonistic language games." Indeed, at the very core of postmodernist ideology is the assertion that language is a self-referential "prison house" which cannot take in truths about the world outside, but can only construct meanings out of itself. There can be no transcendent Logos; the only reality is virtual reality.

For a religion built upon exaltation of the Word, whose God not only called the world into being through words but is linguistic in His very nature, such a suspicious view of language would seem to have little to offer. Yet Veith does think that there are a few things to be said for postmodernism from a Christian perspective, though each of these things is only a highly partial commendation. First, he believes the technique of deconstruction can be valuable, but only if it proceeds on the assumption that the underlying reality of our lives is not masked power relations, but the far deeper reality of sin; and only if it leads to the realization that the construction of one's own meanings, in place of the one true God, is a form of idolatry. Christianity calls upon its followers to cast down idols and die to self; but it calls on them to do so for the sake of Christ and His kingdom, and not merely because they have discovered that golden calves and other expressions of "the sacred" are social constructions, and "the authentic self" is a bourgeois illusion. Postmodernism, then, like all heresies, has a piece of the truth, but only a piece. As Veith puts it, "Postmodernism unmasks problems that modernism tried to hide, but postmodernism can by no means solve them." The second part of that proposition is perhaps obvious; it is the first that Veith especially wants us to take into consideration.

Another point to be made in postmodernism's favor, argues Veith, is the fact that it at least allows cultural room for Christianity in a way that the rationalistic tyranny of modernism did not. The current vogue of "multiculturalism" (depending upon what one means by that most mutable term) accentuates that possibility, especially insofar as it undercuts notions of commonality—more totalizing discourse, that—in favor of tribal forms of association, each with its own characteristic brand of cognitive "difference." In the postmodernist dispensation, Christians too can claim the coveted

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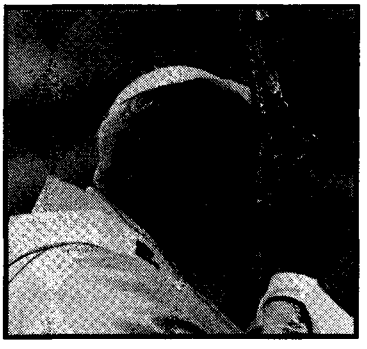

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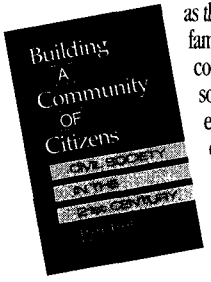

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status of "outsider" or "marginal," and triumphantly call themselves "resident aliens," even if they happen to be tenured white males ensconced in prestige universities. But, as Veith adds, Christians will eventually become targets in a postmodernist culture if they insist upon the transcendent truth of what they profess, since that will constitute the one punishable sin against the postmodernist (dis)order of things.

So even postmodernism's seeming beneficence is likely to sour, Veith predicts, and Christians would do well to distrust it. It is almost entirely in the decline of modernism, and not the rising postmodernist alternative, that the Christian opportunity is to be found. It seems reasonable to posit that a postmodernist political order would be utterly ruthless, since all standards of truth-telling and consistency would have been rendered illegitimate—along with the concept of legitimacy itself. Indeed, postmodernism has profoundly antihumanist tendencies, since it deconstructs both the individual and the general idea of humanity; developments like violent environmental extremism and the animal rights movement are among its quintessential, if not entirely logical, outgrowths. In this respect, nothing could be more challenging to postmodernism than the account of human origins presented in the first two chapters of Genesis.

All these points, and many others, are dealt with by Veith in crisp and direct language, with emphasis placed in each instance upon the specific implications for Christians; and in so doing, he has performed a valuable service. If one had to identify a defect in *Postmodern Times*, it would be only in that one sometimes feels that the book grants too much internal consistency and too much credibility to postmodernism as a coherent philosophy, when it is in fact an outlook so riven with internal contradictions, and so shot through with frivolousness, that it seems unlikely to outlive the decaying modernism upon which it battens. Indeed, it is tempting to argue that postmodernism is merely modernism gone to seed, without rigor or seriousness. For all its putative sympathy for those who suffer and are oppressed, postmodernism often seems little more than a philosophical pose for the comfortable and jaded and clever, those living off inherited capital that they pretend to despise. It seems unlikely that postmodernism will have much to offer them, or anyone else, when times of crisis come, as they inevitably will. If there have been few atheists in foxholes, there will be even fewer postmodernists.

CHRISTIANS, Veith suggests, ought to be able to mount a distinctive challenge to postmodernist platitudes, one that does not simply support or reprise modernist ones, but moves the discussion onto fresh territory. In this undertaking, he recognizes, nothing will be of more fundamental importance than rescuing the dignity of language from its postmodernist detractors and their sometimes unwitting allies in our image-saturated culture. Because of the centrality Christians assign to the Word—spoken, written, and incarnate—the redemption of human language becomes a central Christian task. It is a challenge for which Veith finds biblical precedent. The Tower of Babel, constructed at a time when the world had but one language, was the quintessential modernist, universalist project—man in his pride reaching to the heavens. Then God stopped the construction, and the Babelite's self-deification, by confusing the languages of the world—man's fall into a kind of postmodern perplexity. And so matters remained until the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when men speaking in their own strange tongues were heard as if they were speaking in the hearers' language—thus reversing the curse of Babel and restoring language, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, at the Church's founding moment.

The first two parts of the story are familiar enough from any number of legends, fables, and traditions. Christianity holds no patent on the

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recognition that pride goeth before a fall. It is the final part of the story that remains startlingly unique. Which again suggests the cultural opening that Christianity—particularly a revival of classical, orthodox, confessional, and postliberal Christianity—may find in the years to come. The seemingly endless invocations of "multiculturalism," for example, if they do not lead American society down the road to balkanization and cultural solipsism, can serve to highlight the Church's unique understanding of how unity and diversity are reconciled. "The universal Church, spread through history and throughout the globe," Veith rightly asserts, "is the one true multicultural institution." As such, it can be a sign of contradiction confounding the pretensions of modernists and postmodernists alike.

Justifying God's Ways

EVIL AND THE EVIDENCE FOR GOD: THE CHALLENGE OF JOHN HICK'S THEODICY. By R. DOUGLAS GEIVETT. Afterword by JOHN HICK. *Temple University Press. 276 pp. $44.95.*

Reviewed by **Ian S. Markham**

"IF GOD is all-powerful, then he must be able to abolish evil; if God is all-loving, then he must wish to abolish evil; but evil exists, therefore God cannot be both all-powerful and all-loving." So runs the traditional statement of the problem of evil. Anthony Flew and John Mackie believed that the argument exposes the inner incoherence of theism; how can one harmonize this world with the traditional attributes of God? More recently, it has been treated as a good inductive argument against the existence of God: surely it is very unlikely that a God with the traditional attributes would have created a universe like this.

John Hick's classic *Evil and the God of Love,* first published in 1968, set the contours for all subsequent discussion of the problem. He was responsible for identifying two different responses in the Christian tradition. The first and major response, expounded by Augustine, places all the blame for evil on fallen creatures (both human and angelic). Because of their disobedience the creation has been marred. On this view, evil serves no purpose in the plan of God. The second response is found in Irenaeus. Here evil and suffering are among God's means for creating souls fit for heaven. Humanity was created immature; and life is a vale of soul-making. Hick is a passionate advocate of the second view.

DOUGLAS GEIVETT, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Biola University in La Mirada, California, has set himself the task of explaining why Hick's advocacy of an Irenaean theodicy is inappropriate, and how the Augustinian tradition can be af-

IAN S. MARKHAM *is a lecturer at the University of Exeter and author of* Plurality and Christian Ethics *(Cambridge University Press).*

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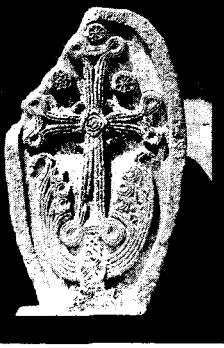
Princeton Theological Seminary



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firmed. His book is scrupulously fair to Hick—a model of accurate reporting—and shows the ways in which Hick's theodicy is of a piece with his opposition to natural theology (in the sense of proofs for God's existence) and his belief in religious pluralism.

In responding to Hick, Geivett essentially takes up three themes. First, he draws attention to the significant role of natural theology in the Augustinian tradition. He points out that in *De libero arbitrio voluntatis*, Augustine is intent on proving the existence of God before formulating his theodicy. It follows that if God's existence can be established on other grounds, the theodicy problem is significantly reduced. Unlike Hick, he believes that natural theology can succeed here, and he draws upon a significant range of contemporary arguments. His favorite seems to be the Kalam cosmological argument, much beloved by William Craig: given that cosmologists tend to believe it is likely that the universe had a start, and given that it is difficult to imagine a universe coming into being uncaused, then it is likely that God was the first cause. This argument is then combined with the anthropic principle (the universe must have properties that make inevitable the existence of intelligent life), providence, answered prayer, and morality to form a cumulative case for the existence of God. God, on these grounds, is more likely than not. In this sense, we start discussing the problem of evil with the significant advantage of knowing that God exists.

Geivett's second theme points to the difficulties with Hick's theodicy. The anthropology is inconsistent: it would be immoral of God to cause (and use) evil as a means to the creation of soul. Hick's version of reincarnation (located in subsequent universes, not this one) and denial of hell undermine the real significance of human freedom—a freedom that can thwart the love of God for eternity.

The final theme stresses the coherence and achievement of a traditional Augustinian theodicy. God is not the direct cause of evil; humans were created innocent, but exercised a good will badly. Our purpose is worship; and hell awaits those who succeed in rebelling.

THE CASE FOR linking natural theology with the problem of evil is sustained brilliantly. Moreover, one can supplement Geivett's case here, for it seems clear that within our culture the problem of evil has assumed an ever greater significance as natural theology and the belief in life after death have been undermined. For the Christian tradition, the context for discussing evil has included certainty about God's existence and the reality of life beyond the grave. As this context has disappeared, theodicy has become an increasingly insurmountable problem. Geivett is thus right to attempt to recover this context.

Hick, in a very interesting afterword, objects to the enterprise by citing the old claim that Kant and Hume demolished all the arguments for God's existence, and claims that Geivett himself is not really interested in attaining a *proof* of God's existence but only in illustrating that it is highly probable. Here Hick is buying into the unacceptable Cartesian standard for knowledge: that it must be established beyond any doubt. However, we now know that this is an impossible standard to meet. We cannot even have such certainty about the existence of other minds. And once we see this flaw in Hick's objection, Geivett's procedure seems entirely reasonable.

Hick is correct, however, in drawing attention to other areas of weakness in Geivett's case, the most shocking being Geivett's complete neglect of the Fall and its relation to natural suffering. For Augustine the Fall is central. According to him, God created an idyllic paradise with no suffering, death, or natural disasters. It was human disobedience that introduced these things into creation. Most educated people in the West no longer find that account plausible. The whole process of evolution involved the suffering and death of millions upon millions of creatures, within a context that included occasional earthquakes and floods. These facts are now part of the scientific data we must accept. And they strongly suggest that God, in the process of creation, built in the inevitability of suffering as a part of His method.

Geivett does not tackle this prob-

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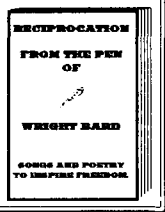

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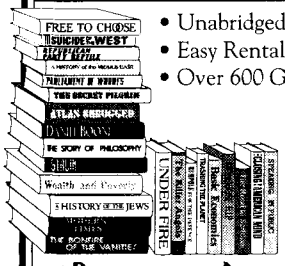

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lem directly. When it comes to natural evil, he offers two alternatives that he considers compatible with an Augustinian theodicy. The first is Alvin Plantinga's fallen angels, who cause earthquakes and floods. The second is that fixed laws are essential for freedom, and earthquakes are simply the inevitable side effects of these laws. It is worth noting that these two alternatives are contradictory: the first views earthquakes as violations of the natural order, while the second views them as an appropriate expression of the natural order. More fundamentally, the former is scientifically implausible—at what point in the process are we to postulate the evil action? And the second, although a much better suggestion, still leaves the mystery of why God does not intervene to mitigate the effects of the natural laws. Presumably, certain goods must emerge from the suffering caused by an earthquake to justify the nonintervention. If so, then the problem of theodicy remains.

Despite these problems, this is an elegantly written book and a valuable contribution to the discussion of theodicy.

The Case for Immigration

IMMIGRATION AND IMMIGRANTS: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT. By MICHAEL FIX and JEFFREY S. PASSEL. *Urban Institute. 104 pp. $10 paper.*

POSTWAR IMMIGRANT AMERICA: A SOCIAL HISTORY. By REED UEDA. *Bedford/St. Martin's Press. 182 pp. $10 paper.*

***Reviewed by* John J. Miller**

WHEN Gov. Lawton Chiles of Florida announced his plans earlier this year to sue the federal government for the cost of illegal immigrants to his state, he nearly made a huge mistake. He almost tried to sue for the cost of all immigrants, legal and illegal. Chiles apparently thought that the burden of providing public education and health care to Florida's newcomers outweighed the enormous economic advantages they have brought to the state over the last four decades. It was a crazy idea—before the influx of Cubans to South Florida, Miami was a sleepy resort for New Yorkers—but the fact that he even considered it, however briefly, speaks volumes about the public's perception of immigrants.

Americans have a lot less to worry about than they think. Almost every indicator used to assess immigrants—welfare use, job displacement, wage depression—turns out to the immigrants' advantage. Contrary to popular perception, they don't overuse welfare, widely displace native workers, or depress wages. When any of these matters is addressed in a meaningful way, the good news is clear. Thanks to Michael Fix and Jeffrey S. Passel of the Urban Institute, we now have a tremendously useful guide to these questions in *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight*. They surely could have come up with a more creative title for their slim volume, but they could not have done a much better job in gathering data, interpreting them, and presenting their findings in a user-friendly format.

TAKE welfare. To say that immigrants receive welfare at a greater rate than natives is strictly true, but tells us surprisingly little. For starters, about 16 percent of refugees, who account for about one of every seven legal immigrants, use welfare. The native rate is just over 4 percent, according to the 1990 census. Refugees, of course, have a strong claim for special assistance. They gain admission to the U.S. because of a well-founded fear of persecution in their homelands. Refugee policy is not driven by the self-interest of family reunification or economic advantage, as are most immigrant admissions, but rather by moral and humanitarian concerns. Aid programs for refugees are certainly in need of dramatic reform—the government should guarantee loans rather than subsidize handouts—but without some improved alternative, refugees' reliance on public assistance is understandable.

By removing refugees from the mix, Fix and Pasel find that nonrefugee immigrants of working age

JOHN J. MILLER *is Associate Director of the Manhattan Institute's Center for the New American Community in Washington, D.C.*

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Robert Fulford, *Globe & Mail*

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use welfare at a rate of less than 3 percent—nearly one and a half points below the native rate. While it is unfortunate that they need to rely upon welfare at all, immigrants are clearly not abusing the system.

One area in need of quick reform, as the Urban Institute study shows, is the rapidly increasing use of public assistance among elderly immigrants. More than one-quarter of non-refugee immigrants over the age of sixty-five now receive welfare, typically Supplemental Security Income. In the future, Congress would be wise to make sure that citizens and legal residents who sponsor the admission of an elderly family member attend to that person's financial needs, rather than rely on government support.

Fix and Passel's coverage of education levels, economic impacts, and population projections is equally enlightening and suggests that, on the whole, we have many reasons to be grateful for the current wave of immigrants, which leaves open the question of why so many Americans seem to harbor resentments against them. Most recent polls show that over 60 percent of the public would like to see a reduction in current immigration levels (in 1993, the U.S. admitted 904,000 legal immigrants, including 113,000 refugees). With Congress probably moving toward some kind of immigration legislation in 1995, the restrictionists will certainly try to have their way.

WHAT UNDERLIES all of the anxiety? Partly a traditional American animosity toward immigrants. We have as a society never fully embraced them, even as our laws have willingly admitted them. We have always worried about the problem of assimilation, about whether immigrants would "fit in." This is a long-standing concern. What is new, however, is what some people are calling the "browning" of America. Today's immigrants are more racially diverse than ever before. The vast majority hail from Asia, the Caribbean, or Latin America. The number of sending countries with at least 100,000 foreign-born residents in the U.S. rose from twenty-one in 1970 to forty-one in 1990. Groups like the Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans can point to a long-standing presence in the U.S., but newcomers from Guatemala, Guyana, and Vietnam have considerably shorter traditions.

From 1951 to 1960, only 2.5 million immigrants, mostly European, traveled to our shores. Germany served as the largest feeder nation, the source of over 477,000 newcomers. Next came Canada, with just under 378,000. Today, Europeans account for less than one-fifth of the total. In 1992, Mexicans led the way among legal immigrants, followed by Vietnamese, Filipinos, former Soviets, and Dominicans. More Pakistanis made the trip than Germans, more Taiwanese than Canadians. And with more than two-thirds of all immigrants settling in just four states—California (38 percent), New York (14 percent), Florida (8 percent), and Texas (8 percent)—their populations are highly concentrated and visible.

As the historian of immigration Reed Ueda points out in *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History*, population alarmists used to worry about an Anglo-Saxon "race suicide," that is, that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were out-reproducing the native stock. Although we use more polite terms today, the notion of "race suicide" lives on. Journalists and advocacy groups openly declare a "majority minority" future for the U.S., but they should learn from our past experience that today's racial and ethnic identities will not hold firm in the coming century. Mixed-race marriages have quadrupled over the last twenty years, reaching 1.2 million, or more than 2 percent of all marriages. They make up an even larger fraction of the marriages taking place today. As the children of these unions grow up, get married, and have their own children, the mixture will prove an even greater jumble. The question of who is black or white, Asian or Hispanic, will grow increasingly irrelevant.

IN 1940, sociologists noted that only 16 percent of Catholics and 6 percent of Jews married outside their religious group. They began speaking of a "triple melting pot," in which religion served as a barrier to complete assimilation. Nobody speaks of it anymore, however. Marriages between Catholics and Protestants are now common, and about half of all Jews now marry

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non-Jewish spouses. The new wall surrounding race will probably collapse as easily. Half of all Japanese Americans today marry somebody who is not Japanese. In 1989, there were 39 percent more births to exogamous couples consisting of one Japanese and one white parent than to endogamous couples of two Japanese American parents. We can observe similar trends among other Asian groups, as well as Hispanics. About half of all Mexican Americans in California now choose non-Hispanic spouses. The black-white divide remains sharp, but these kinds of marriages are also increasing.

Intermarriage rates among different ethnic groups have always been high. The vast majority of Americans who descend from northern and western European stock now claim multiple ancestry. That is, these people are not just German or Irish or English, but a mixture of all three and more. Most descendants of the former "new immigrants"—those who arrived roughly at the turn of the century—are beginning to cite more than one ethnic heritage. They are no longer exclusively Italian or Polish or Greek, but something more. We easily forget the staggering diversity of previous immigrant waves and assume, because most of them were white and European, that they all managed to share a common sense of identity. The truth is that at first they fought and struggled and displayed irrational ethnic hatreds. They were seen as distinctly different. "They also," Ueda reminds us, "were classified racially as separate and inferior to Americans from northern Europe."

THIS PREVIOUS social reality has largely receded into the background today, thanks largely to high levels of "miscegenation." More and more Americans now identify with a new supra-ethnic category they call "American," whose members come from many different backgrounds. In the 1990 Census, over thirteen million Americans reported their ancestry as "American" or "United States."

This successful assimilation, writes Ueda, "was a precondition for opening admissions to all regions of the world. . . . The national fabric grew more complex in its forms of cohesion, developing a capacity to accept greater diversity." He goes on to argue that the nationalization of ethnic politics has threatened this capacity, as immigrant advocacy groups increasingly pressure the federal government to micromanage race relations through affirmative action, voting rights, and curricular reform. "A type of sociological determinism holding that group identity ineluctably define[s] the characteristics and interests of individuals [has] gained ascendancy," writes Ueda.

"This book should be required reading for every pastor in America and for the seminary professors who train them. Here, at long last, is a clear call for the intellectual leadership of the church to listen with empathy and sensitivity to the deep spiritual yearning hidden beneath the surface of today's popular religion."
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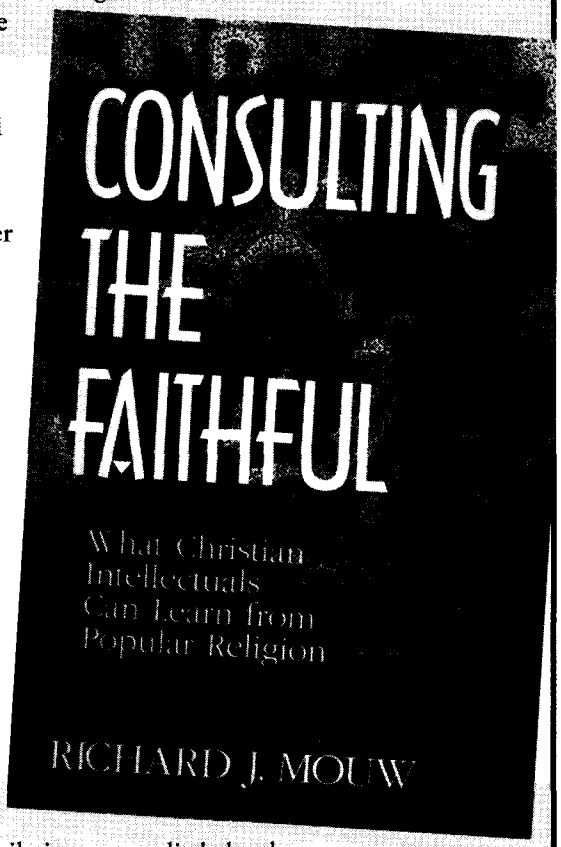

"In this marvelously readable and extraordinarily important little book, Richard Mouw calls us to view popular religion with less suspicion and more charity, indeed with the respect that is due the piety of ordinary Christians — which includes most of us."
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This apparent rejection of the "weak and fluid boundaries between immigrant groups [that] have been the historical key to national cohesion" makes it "hard to sustain a vision of a greater nation that is more than a collection of groups and of a greater national destiny that is more than coexistence."

This is a grim caution in an otherwise celebratory account of America's ability to remake itself continually. Nevertheless, immigrants will assimilate, no matter what their purported leadership claims. The big question is whether their assimilation will outpace the government's bumbling efforts to reinforce ethnic identities and the politicians' attempts to stigmatize them as economically and culturally indelible. Ueda clearly thinks the immigrants will win out, if only because they have done so many times before. His compelling and optimistic history shows how anything else would profoundly betray the modern American identity, firmly rooted in its uprooted past.

The Capital of Ambivalence

MODERNITY AND CRISES OF IDENTITY: CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN FIN-DE-SIÈCLE VIENNA. By JACQUES LE RIDER. Translated by ROSEMARY MORRIS. *Continuum. 380 pp. $34.95.*

Reviewed by **Edward T. Oakes**

TO THE BEST of my knowledge, no one has yet compared the Vienna of Freud's time with Periclean Athens; but if it ever happens, I will understand why, especially after reading this remarkable book. Merely to cite the roster of artists, thinkers, and creators who at one time or another resided in Vienna around the turn of the century is to invite astonishment at so productive and effulgent a time: Franz Brentano; Ludwig Wittgenstein and the positivists of the (tellingly named) "Vienna Circle" in philosophy; Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan Zweig in literature; Gustav Klimt in the visual arts; Adolf Loos (and once again Wittgenstein!) in architecture; Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schönberg in music; Theodor Herzl in politics; and of course Sigmund Freud in psychology.

But in a way, the comparison would be most misleading, as Jacques Le Rider, Professor of German Studies at the University of Paris, also makes clear in his brilliant portrait of this deeply neurotic age (he devotes a rather tweaky section to the "nerves" of the Viennese). The parallel between Athens and Vienna ultimately breaks down not simply for the obvious reason that no European city could ever hope to monopolize the culture the way Athens did when Aeschylus and the young Socrates strolled amid the statuary of the Acropolis. Much more centrally, Athens was a city, at least in Pericles' day, bursting with confidence and youth—even to the point of falling prey to a blind arrogance, or hubris, that would nearly destroy her within two generations.

Vienna, Le Rider makes clear, was a much different case. For one thing, it is a bit disconcerting to discover how many of the aforementioned worthies positively *hated* their home city. One native even coined the term *Wiener Selbsthass* (Viennese self-hatred) to label the syndrome. To these venturesome thinkers and artists, being stuck in the twilight of Hapsburg Vienna mostly meant trying to be an innovator in a culture notorious for its conservatism (the Emperor Franz Josef—ever the eccentric—disdained everything modern, including telephones, cars, elevators, and electric lights). Freud's biographer Ernst Jones relates that when he first met Freud, he innocently remarked

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J., *teaches in the Religious Studies Program at New York University.*

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how exciting it must be to live in a city so full of new ideas, at which Freud sprang up from his chair and burst out in anger: "I have lived here for fifty years and have never come across a new idea here!"

But in true Viennese fashion, self-hatred is not the whole story. For the pioneers of Vienna were much more ambivalent about their innovations than most intellectual historians nowadays admit:

> Viennese modernism was by no means triumphal or sure of itself. It kept a strong awareness of loss, of a decadence which must be fought, of a world in a state of collapse and a still undefined future. The Viennese modernists trod their chosen path with the consciousness of a necessity which seemed to them almost like fate. . . . Nietzsche's scorn for "modern ideas" made a profound impression on his admirers: "This book [*Beyond Good and Evil*]," he said, "is a criticism of *modernity*, embracing the modern sciences, arts, even politics, together with certain indications as to a type that would be the reverse of modern man, for as little like him as possible: a noble, yea-saying man."

Amidst this swirl of ambiguity, in what must seem like the very capital of ambivalence, it should come as no surprise that Vienna was also home to a man who must surely rank as the *Ur-Beispiel* of the self-hating Jew, Karl Kraus. As Le Rider well recognizes, self-hatred is a notoriously slippery term and is too easily bandied about, often applied to any Jew who strays too far from communal norms (one thinks in the American context of Philip Roth). But if there be such a type at all, then surely Kraus fills the bill:

> Concerned as he was to assert his distinctiveness within Viennese intellectual circles by every possible means, he yet retained a lifelong lingering desire to lose himself in German culture, and above all, in the German language. Anything which threw doubt on this identification drew from Kraus an impassioned and (it must be said) frequently unconvincing response: he joined the anti-Dreyfus faction, and when commenting on the proceedings of ritual murder which were exposing a Jew to the worst of anti-Semitic prejudice, he was chiefly concerned to dissociate himself from any kind of "Jewish solidarity." In his literary journal he welcomed Houston Stewart Chamberlain and sang his praises, while he never lost a chance of displaying his contempt for Heinrich Heine.

Perhaps Le Rider's most fascinating chapter is on the proto-feminism of nineteenth-century Vienna (well antedating the suffragette movement in Great Britain). Here too we find the same kinds of inner torment that were at work in Jewish self-definition: where exactly to *locate* liberation? And here too we feel the same sense of suffocation that is the hallmark of all Viennese innovation in that fevered time. As feminist scholars are not slow to point out, there is a very definite *social* context in Freud's time that led so many women to collapse into hysterics in his office. These women were in effect the Newtonian apple that led to Freud's later hypotheses; for when he realized that his neurological examinations were getting nowhere, that, physiologically speaking, his patients were no different from non-hysterics, he was forced to posit a special set of life experiences that the healthy brains of those hysterical women had registered, but suppressed. As is now universally known, he hypothesized early child-

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hood traumas to account for later adult breakdowns, but then retracted this hypothesis in favor of *invented* childhood trauma.

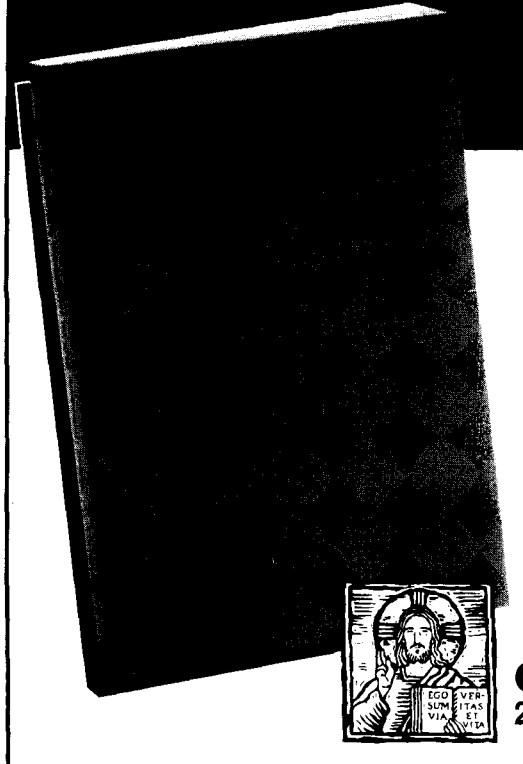
But surely, feminist scholars say (and I think rightly), bourgeois Vienna with its official Hapsburg ideology of duty and hierarchy and its rigid assignment of masculine and feminine roles must be the real culprit, and not some jerry-built theory cobbled together from Freud's schoolboy Sophocles and Comte's dreary one-dimensional positivism (Wittgenstein called Freud the "great mythographer of the twentieth century"). So while, when he focuses on the social context of suffocating patriarchy, Le Rider is no innovator, he is far more alert than many feminist interpreters in seeing how the cure—liberation from hierarchy and patriarchally assigned roles—could easily double back on itself, leaving, as it were, seven devils in the cleanly swept house where previously there had been but one.

> The redistribution of the cultural roles of masculinity and femininity triggered individual crises of disturbed—and subsequently redefined—sexual identity, while literature and *Kulturkritik* contrasted the antifeminist terrors [of the traditionalists] with utopias of feminism, homosexuality, and androgyny [from the innovators]. The challenge presented by anti-Semitism to the assimilation of Jews into German culture shattered Jewish identity into an astonishing variety of individual self-identifications, with [myriads of] myths and role models, both personal and collective. These two series of phenomena give a particularly spectacular illustration of the theme of identity crisis which is the distinctive mark of Viennese modernism—and which also explains the ambivalence of that period, when Vienna was at one and the same time the home of modernism and the "testing ground of the apocalypse," to quote Kraus.

And then there is Otto Weininger, whose *Sex and Character* anticipates many of the oddities of the so-called "men's movement" today. With the possible exception of Tolstoy's tract on the Gospels, Weininger's essay was *the* book that exercised the greatest influence on Wittgenstein. It is also, and this time with the *definite* exception of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism,* the most peculiar and eccentric book ever to have come out of the overheated terrarium of high Viennese culture. (Freud described Weininger as both "highly gifted and sexually deranged," and he was, at least in this one diagnosis, right.)

Toward a Response to the American Crisis

Glenn N. Schram



If present cultural trends continue, Americans will be unable to keep their democratic liberties. The combination of irreligion and false (gnostic) religion is paving the road to an American tyranny, possibly a totalitarian one. To reverse these trends, the author makes proposals for reform in both law and education.

A subsidiary problem is that Americans are insufficiently realistic about politics, and a new section of this expanded edition deals with political realism. Other new materials place the themes of decline and renewal in the broader context of Western civilization as a whole, and explore the limits of toleration in a society which is both pluralistic and Christianly inspired.

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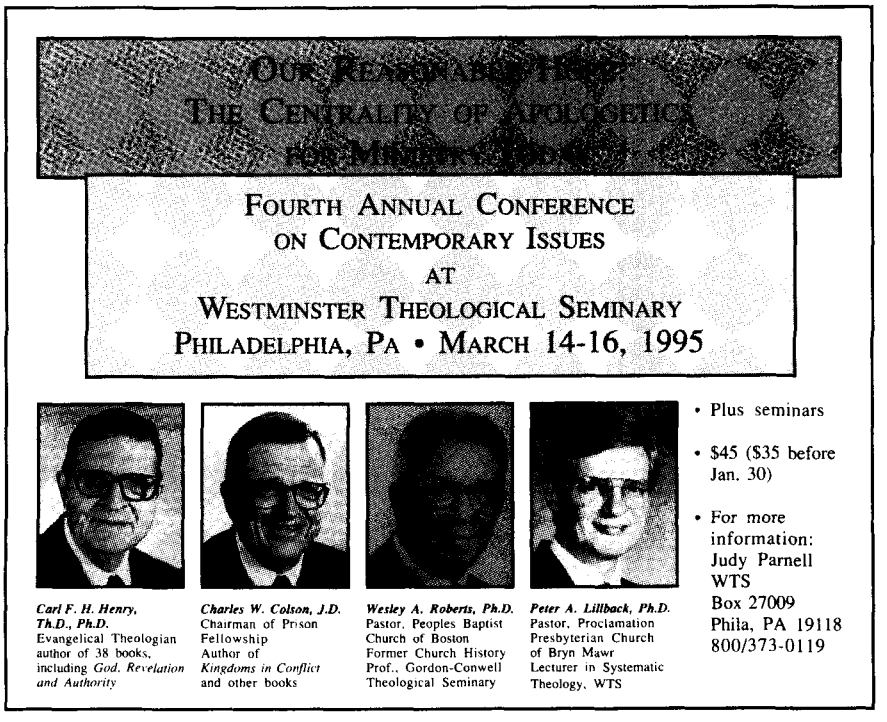
So Weininger too gets his own chapter. His thesis, fiercely argued, and indeed with an extreme of rhetoric faintly reminiscent of Nietzsche, was that the culture of his day, both bourgeois and modernist, was in fact so thoroughly feminized as to make the redemption of masculinity impossible outside of an apocalyptic scenario; and that *this*, and not some alleged patriarchal bias, was the root of all modern decadence (and violence).

To pile on the ironies, Le Rider carefully demonstrates through a minute examination of the relevant evidence that the real Vienna was in fact nothing like the city that her artists and theorizers felt they were living in. In spite of the Emperor's nutty Luddism, as well as the fact that it was excessively dependent on foreign capital, Vienna was moving forward into modern times at an extraordinary rate: "The great public works which were inaugurated by the building of the Ringstrasse went alongside an equally spectacular renewal of the infrastructure. The Danube and Wien rivers were analyzed, the water supply renewed, an urban railway network built, gas and electricity laid on." Only in politics was there a vacuum.

Even in this regard, however, one cannot help but wonder about the longevity of the Viennese irony. Nothing might now seem to some to be more absurd than the House of Hapsburg on the eve of World War I (which bore perhaps even more responsibility for the outbreak of that war than did the German Kaiser). If the Hapsburg regime is thought of at all these days, it no doubt conjures up scenes more reminiscent of *The Student Prince* or *The Mouse That Roared* than the Court of Charlemagne. At the same time, whatever its massive faults, it *did* represent the vision of a multinational state. And now we look at the shards of that same Austrio-Hungarian Empire and see . . . "Greater" Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia. Is this to be regarded as an improvement?

All of these ironies, and more, are presented in a text of great subtlety and learning, almost overrich in citations and nuance—perhaps the truest tribute to this remarkable city. Today we are the heirs and legatees of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna in ways we often never suspect, and perhaps never more so than when we indulge in that common cultural tic that automatically looks on "bourgeois" as a suspect term, a more elaborate way of saying inauthentic, phony, lifeless. The most unsettling part of this book is Le Rider's gentle hint throughout that when the Viennese modernists hurled themselves against the norms and values of their society, they were chafing against mere gossamer chains and bridles of cotton.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JACK: A LIFE OF C.S. LEWIS. By GEORGE SAYER. *Crossway. 423 pp. $13.99 paper.*

Most biographies of C. S. Lewis so far have been hagiographical chronicles, the great exception being A. N. Wilson's notorious warts-and-all treatment, which, though it has unfairly been called a hatchet job, would rather create warts than leave any unexposed. George Sayer—who was Lewis' pupil and then his friend for thirty years—avoids the "plaster saint" treatment, and is more willing to let the warts show than most of Lewis' other Christian biographers; but his admiration for Lewis is so great that it sometimes disarms his critical faculties. Wilson, for all his recklessness and poor scholarship—some of which Sayer responds to in an Afterword to this new edition (of a book first published in 1988)—is savvier in a number of ways. Nonetheless, Sayer's book is clear and reliable, and it is particularly useful for American readers baffled by the little mysteries of English culture: the sociology of the public schools, the tutorial system at Oxford, and so on. But many of us are still waiting for a more responsible writer than Wilson to provide not just an account but an *interpretation* of Lewis' remarkable character. To be fair, Sayer claims only to "present the factual background" to Lewis' "motivation and character," but at this point in the history of Lewis studies one wishes for more. Perhaps Sayer remembers all too well J. R. R. Tolkein's words, just after Sayer had met his new tutor:

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"You'll never get to the bottom of him."

— *Alan Jacobs*

The Alienist. By Caleb Carr. *Random House. 496 pp. $22.*

It's 1896 in New York and a murderer is horribly mutilating and eating boy prostitutes. On the case are a brave and astute investigative reporter from the *New York Times* and his friend, an iconoclastic and freethinking alienist (which is what psychologists were called then). They are backed up by a fetching feminist who wants to be the first female cop in New York and by the very progressive new police commissioner, Theodore Roosevelt. The villains are flashy gangsters (who can also turn out to be good guys) and J. P. Morgan and his sycophants, such as the Catholic and Episcopal bishops who are in his pay. Not so much a villain, since he is more sinned against than sinning, is the fellow who eats little boys. He is, after all, the victim of a rigorously religious upbringing. This first novel puts one in mind of Claude Rains' line in *Casablanca,* "Round up the usual suspects." The story line formula can be simply put: Controversial and courageous secular enlightenment vs. repressive and corrupt religious tradition, nicely peppered with prurience. In the acknowledgments, the author thanks a Tom Pivinski who helped him "turn nightmares into prose." The prose is generally effective. If only he had more interesting nightmares.

— *Janet Marsden*

The Price of Prophecy: Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom, and Security. By Alexander F. C. Webster. *Ethics and Public Policy Center. 349 pp. $22.50.*

Webster, an Orthodox priest and former research fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, has produced a valuable introduction to Orthodox theory and practice in the area of public policy. After providing a helpful guide to the complex ethnic and political diversity within American Orthodoxy, he focuses on the experience of the Russian and Romanian Patriarchates under communism. Here Webster honestly addresses cases of ecclesiastical collaboration with Communist governments, although he also points out numerous examples of dissent. He is just as frank when he discusses the American Orthodox concern for human rights abroad, demonstrating just how one-sided and ethnocentric much of that interest has been, e.g., the Antiochian Archdiocese's concern for Arab and Palestinian (but not Israeli) human rights. Two chapters on conventional and nuclear security issues include detailed criticism of various official Church pronouncements ranging from World War II to SDI and Afghanistan. The final chapter is a thoughtful reflection on the moral, political, and ecclesial dilemmas confronting Orthodoxy's public policy witness. Webster is quite critical of Orthodoxy's failure to provide adequate leadership on these issues, characterizing most of its public policy statements as "woefully deficient expressions of authentic Orthodox moral tradition." These shortcomings are further exacerbated by the scandalous and uncanonical disunity of Orthodoxy in America. But Webster sees the beginnings of a renewal of Orthodoxy's moral tradition in what he refers to as the "morally reborn" Churches of Russia, Ukraine, and Romania, and suggests the ironic possibility that this rebirth may well eclipse American Orthodoxy's role as a prophetic voice for peace and freedom.

— *Allyne Smith*

The Essential Paul Ramsey. Edited by William Werpehowski and Stephen D. Crocco. *Yale University Press. 272 pp. $30.*

Tragedy, Tradition, Transformism: The Ethics of Paul Ramsey. By D. Stephen Long. *Westview. 220 pp. $49.95.*

The editors of *The Essential Paul Ramsey* have judiciously selected some of the best and most representative writings of one of the most distinguished religious ethicists of the century. Here is Ramsey on resistance to illegitimate authority, on the justification of war, on the patient as person, on love as the foundation of faithfulness, and much else. The editors provide an extended introduction that will help

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the uninitiated to understand why Ramsey left such a major mark on the work of so many moral philosophers and theologians in our time. This is a most welcome volume. The study by D. Charles Long of Duke Divinity School has the makings of an intellectual biography and provides some new and important insights into the development of Ramsey's thought. It will be of interest chiefly to Ramsey scholars and those engaged by internal debates in contemporary academic ethics. One gets the impression that Long fell out of love with Ramsey as he was working on this book. His final judgments are harsh. Ramsey, like other "realists," was so daunted by the tragedy of life that he betrayed the power of Christianity to transform the world. He became a defender of the status quo and ended up, as it is said in some circles, doing ethics for Caesar rather than for Christ. The book is dedicated to Paul Ramsey and Stanley Hauerwas, who were close friends. Long echoes Hauerwas' critique of "ethical realism," but without his generosity of spirit toward Ramsey.

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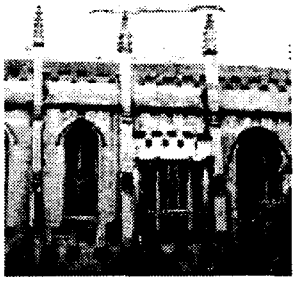

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PUTTING THE SOUL BACK IN MEDICINE. By DAVID SCHIEDERMAYER, M.D. *Baker. 192 pp. $9.99 paper.*

The author practices internal medicine at the County Hospital in Milwaukee and teaches medical ethics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. A thoughtful addition to a growing Christian literature on the dilemmas of medical treatment and the need to make human again the relationship between patients and those who care for them.

AIDS, GAYS, AND THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. By RICHARD L. SMITH. *Pilgrim Press/UCC Press. 159 pp. $14.95 paper.*

In his foreword, sociologist Robert N. Bellah writes that he agrees with the author that "a principled rejection of gay sexuality, whether put forward by the Church or any other sector of society, is morally indefensible. It has the same status today as arguments for the inferiority of women. To remain stuck in that position, as the church for the time being seems likely to do, is not only unfortunate: it makes the church collaborate in continuing forms of domination." Actually, the author, who dedicates the book to his male lover, has written a work less strident than Bellah's foreword might suggest. While he, too, wants the Church to bless same-sex unions and thinks Catholic teaching is the product of "social constructionism" and /can be changed by reconstruction, the book offers an informative and frequently moving account of Catholic ministries to PWAs (people with AIDS). While there is little that is new in terms of substantive argument, this is gay advocacy of a more civil order than usual.

THE CATHOLIC TRADITION. By TIMOTHY G. MCCARTHY. *Loyola University Press. 426 pp. $23.95 cloth, $13.95 paper.*

The author covers the period from 1878 to the present in a readable manner and sticking quite closely to the way the story is usually told. He concludes with a moderately progressive version of "liberationism" as the most promising prospect for the future of Catholicism.

THROUGH THE MORAL MAZE. By ROBERT KANE. *Paragon House. 251 pp. $27.95.*

A University of Texas professor of philosophy offers a careful and nicely reasoned approach to the subject of his subtitle, "searching for absolute values in a pluralistic world." No fireworks, but an unusual measure of common sense and a desire to be fair to opposing views are evident in this reflection that concludes with a strong chapter on the indispensability of the family in moral formation. "When there is love in the home, there is peace in the kingdom," said Confucius, and Kane warmly agrees.

THE QUESTION OF FREE WILL: A HOLISTIC VIEW. By MORTON WHITE. *Princeton University Press. 135 pp. $19.95.*

The veteran (some would say venerable) professor emeritus adds to his long list of writings a reflection on a perennial question. His pragmatic or "holistic" epistemology provides the possibility, he contends, of af-

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firming something like free will without denying determinism. The specialists who are most likely to be interested in this book will no doubt divide on whether White's free will is anything like free will. Others might stick with the wag who observed, "Of course we must affirm free will. We have no choice."

THE THEME IS FREEDOM: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND THE AMERICAN TRADITION. By M. STANTON EVANS. *Regnery/Gateway. 322 pp. $24.*

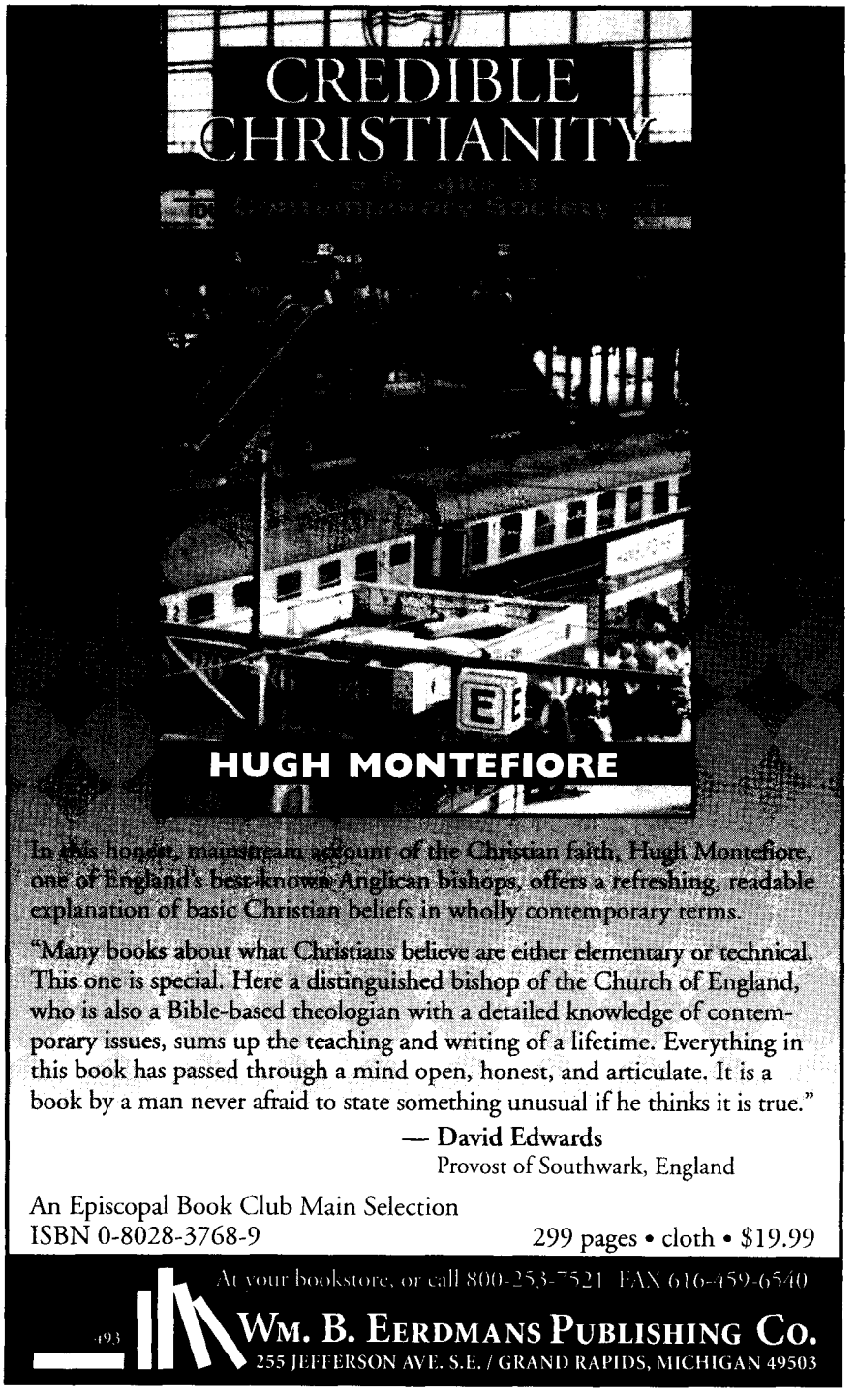
A conservative champion offers a counter-history to the usual secularized telling of the American founding. The book would mainly benefit those who have been taken in by that telling, but they are the least likely to read it. Opponents of government's increasing encroachment upon religious freedom will find a strong ally in Mr. Evans.

THE HAIL MARY: A VERBAL ICON OF MARY. By NICHOLAS AYO, C.S.C. *University of Notre Dame Press. 231 pp. $32.95.*

The author sets himself no easy task. He intends to rehabilitate traditional Marian devotion in a manner that sympathetically engages contemporary ecumenical and feminist concerns. Given the difficulty of the goal, he succeeds quite remarkably. Protestants and Catholics, feminists and those of less elevated consciousness, will find in this book common ground for the acknowledgment of Mary as the first of the faithful.

THE MORAL ANIMAL: WHY WE ARE THE WAY WE ARE: THE NEW SCIENCE OF EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY. By ROBERT WRIGHT. *Pantheon. 467 pp. $27.50.*

A senior editor of the *New Republic* clearly lays out an argument that only a few years ago would have been widely condemned as an instance of reactionary Social Darwinism. In a generally bleak intellectual culture, this book is a welcome sign that some previously forbidden subjects can be calmly and intelligently aired. With an emphasis more on evolution than psychology, Wright describes the ways in which natural selection produces mental mechanisms that do not determine behavior but do equip human beings to respond to new circumstances. Although his confidence in evolutionary theory, and it is a theory, tends toward the dogmatic, the author tries to resist evolutionists' customary compulsion to radical reductionism. At the same time, there is a tendency to debunk what James Q. Wilson calls "the moral sense," which results in a deflation of authentic morality in "the moral animal." There are other major problems with the argument—not least Wright's reliance on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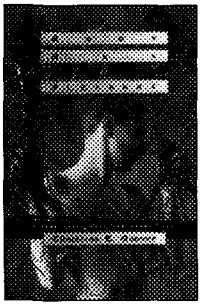

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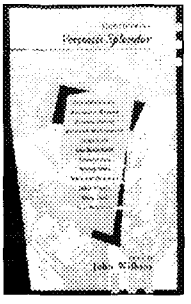

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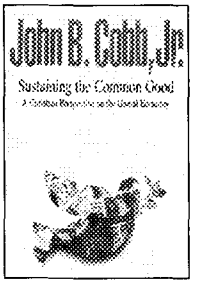

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a rather thin version of utilitarianism—but it is an argument very much worth engaging.

Understanding Your Rights. By Russell Shaw. *Servant (Ann Arbor). 227 pp. $8.99 paper.*

A conservative Catholic who believes that the Church is plagued by clericalism of several insidious varieties, Shaw has produced a handbook to help lay people understand their rights (and, he insistently adds, responsibilties) according to canon law and official Church teaching.

The Two Churches: Catholicism and Capitalism in the World System. By Michael L. Budde. *Duke University Press. 172 pp. $31.95.*

The author, a political scientist at Auburn University, contends that the Catholic Church is essentially anticapitalist in its teaching and will become more so, despite the efforts of apologists for nationalist capitalism such as Michael Novak, George Weigel, and other known suspects. Regrettably, Mr. Budde is more given to assertion than to argument. That, combined with his cavalier assumption of the moral superiority of socialism (which he distinguishes from "state socialism"), reduces a potentially interesting book to little more than a very opinionated tract.

The Death of Jutta and Election as Magistra

—Hildegard of Bingen to her Community, Disibodenberg, 1136

No one knows the hour the black wing visits
nor when the rose mallow opens.
Our crystal visions fade with sunset
for God's loom weaves tapestries
we may not perceive, save
by the golden thread that on occasion
glimmers in the fabric's fields—
so our mother Jutta, so like a star
in a vast firmament we cannot see.
Her bier rests before the high altar
flanked by candles of celestial fire.

Now you call a lesser soul
locked in her cell of everyday work,
a shriveled hand made whole by God
through Jutta's patient wisdom.
Though I tremble at the honor,
beseech you all for tolerance,
this role as mother may
like the irritant in the oyster's eye
spin a pearl, God's precious food
to serve my sisters of Disibodenberg.

Stella Nesanovich

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

The Religious Right as Terrible Threat, Utter Irrelevance, or Something Else

The cover of the *New Republic* pictures this big thick book titled *The Constitution of the United States.* The real Constitution makes a very thin pamphlet, but with all that some folk have "discovered" in the Constitution in recent decades, maybe it looks to them like a big thick book. Anyway, the book is cut up in the shape of a cross. Very imaginative, that. Last month's literature from People for the American Way had a flag cut up in the shape of a cross, and somewhere recently was a cartoon with a drooping map of the U.S. suspended from a cross. The object of these excitements is, of course, the terrible religious right that, some would persuade us, threatens to destroy all that freedom-loving Americans hold dear.

The stated theme of this issue of *TNR* is "Where Religion Fits in American Politics." The answer, one gathers, is that it doesn't. In the first article, David Frum explains why the religious right doesn't matter politically. In the second, John B. Judis warns that it matters a lot, apparently being the greatest danger since Hitler, maybe even since Joe McCarthy. Then historian Sean Wilentz reviews a book that gives a favorable account of American religion's role in social change (*Cosmos Crumbling* by Robert H. Abzug) and he cautions us that there is also an ugly face of religion in public life. The last is fair enough; the first two are fair not at all.

John B. Judis has in recent years become one of the left's favorite chroniclers of the right. He made his chief mark with a biography of William F. Buckley, Jr., which assures us that Mr. Buckley has grown over the years and it is alright to like him so long as you don't agree with him. In the present exercise ("Crosses to Bear"), Judis goes looking for crazy things that religious rightists have been known to say, and, goodness knows, he's in a target-rich environment. He informs us, inter alia, that "if the movement has a theoretician, it is Texas fundamentalist David Barton, author of *The Myth of Separation.*" Barton is not without significant influence in sectors of what is vaguely called the religious right, but there are writers much more widely read and cited. Barton serves Judis' purposes, however, since he offers an implausibly simple version of a "Christian America," complete with graphs purporting to demonstrate that our national decline commenced with the "rejection of divine law" in the school prayer decisions of the early 1960s.

Actually, *The Myth of Separation* is scholarship of a high order compared with some of the books Judis might have mentioned to illustrate his point. The point, or so it seems, is that people of the religious right are not so very bright and are therefore the fit objects of the sniggering superiority of their social and political betters. Or, as one *Washington Post* reporter put it a while back, they are "poor, uneducated, and easily led." (To its credit, the *Post* has since run several extensive analysis of the religious right that, while not sympathetic, are respectful and frequently insightful.) For Judis, however, sniggering is only permitted between the raising of alarums that these Christian rubes are the latest manifestation of the ever-present fascist threat. He doesn't put it quite that way, but only the obtuse will miss the point.

Like Professor Higgins in another context, Mr. Judis wonders, "Why can't they be like us?" He graciously allows that Christians can be constructively engaged in politics. There was Reinhold Niebuhr, for instance. Stifling the suspicion that Mr. Judis has not really read *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, which he invokes, and noting that our respect for Niebuhr is second to few, one must point out that he is quite wrong in suggesting that Niebuhr, unlike religious conservatives today, did not make rather direct connections between Christian faith and specific

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public policies. Niebuhr was, for instance, a founder and the moral captain of Americans for Democratic Action, an organization that did not stop at the brink of partisanship. And his writings in the late lamented *Christianity and Crisis*, which he also founded, offered very specific counsel on the political controversies of the day. Including, incidentally, his counsel that the school prayer decisions were a dangerous step toward the secularizing of American public life.

In short, Niebuhr was a good liberal; a very intelligent liberal with a profound sense of human limits, historical irony, and Divine judgment, but a good liberal for all that. It was easier to be that kind of liberal before liberalism was transmogrified into what Lionel Trilling termed "the adversary culture," an elite culture at war with the beliefs and behavior, especially the religious beliefs and behavior, of the American people. Mr. Judis deplores the fact that Pat Robertson and his friends do not speak in the refined tones of Niebuhr from what were then the respectable academic bastions of Morningside Heights. And it is true, the notes of nuance, ambiguity, irony, ambivalence, uncertainty, and tentativeness are not much struck at rallies of the Christian Coalition.

Under the auspices of the religious right, Judis mourns, religion "becomes infected with the darker egoism of group and nation; it no longer softens and counters our ungenerous impulses but clothes them in holy righteousness." Leaving aside whether there is some other kind of righteousness, I expect Niebuhr today would advise Mr. Judis to spare a generous impulse or two for millions of Americans who, knowing full well that they too are sinners, are justly fed up with being treated with contempt by political elites and have decided they aren't going to take it any more. Like Peter Finch in *Network*, they are "mad as hell" and, as Mr. Judis unsurprisingly succeeds in demonstrating, they sometimes sound like it. But enough of Judis' "Crosses to Bear." In trying to understand the remarkable and often confusing insurgency of the religion factor in contemporary politics, his article does not get us much beyond the bumper stickers.

Conservatives vs. Conservatives

David Frum's article ("Dead Wrong") is considerably more interesting. Frum, formerly with the *Wall Street Journal*, has recently published his critique of contemporary conservatism, *Dead Right* (a New Republic Book), which contains a good deal of information and argument that challenges settled assumptions on both the right and the left. *Dead Right*, I am glad to say, is definitely superior to "Dead Wrong." In recent months, Frum has been pushing hard the thesis that conservatives, and the Republican Party in particular, have made a grave mistake in paying so much attention to social conservatives, as distinct from economic conservatives.

When it comes to counting votes and otherwise measuring real power, Frum contends in this article, the social conservatives don't amount to much. He invites us to infer that, on the issues, he is generally sympathetic to the social conservatives, but his job is just to give the facts, unpleasant though they may be. "Christian conservatives often react with hostility to bad news, even when they hear it from their friends. Good populists, they confuse the observation that they *are* losing with the opinion that they *ought* to lose. And they usually reply to bad news by citing polling data that indicate substantial public support for their positions."

What is wrong with that, according to Frum, is that Christian conservatives assume that this is a democracy in which, through their representative institutions, the people deliberate and decide the questions of great public moment. That is not the way it works in the real world. Frum writes, "American politics is a far more elitist business than most of us are comfortable admitting." It is not entirely clear just how uncomfortable David Frum is with the circumstance in which real power is wielded by "bureaucracies, legislatures, and courts," with public opinion mattering on occasion. He compares public opinion to the atomic bomb in international relations—"useful when it comes time for the ultimate showdown but not terribly relevant to ordinary decision-making."

David Frum's somewhat sniffy dismissiveness with respect to public opinion is, of course, in what some consider the grand and others consider the perversely antidemocratic tradition of Walter Lippmann. In any event, the atom bomb metaphor is less than apt, since one supposes that ordinary decision-making in international affairs is very much influenced by who has atomic bombs. But Mr. Frum's point is that, no matter how much popular support they have, the positions of the religious right are not going anywhere because its leaders are no match for the political elites that run the country. He writes, "More important than the ability to pack a nomination meeting in Amarillo, Texas, is the ability to sway the media, to attract support in the academic world, to lobby congressional staffers, to write a solid legal brief."

They Make No Difference

Frum ticks off the issues that seem to matter most to the religious right and concludes that it has yet to inflict a serious scratch on politics as usual. On church-state relations, the courts are as devoted to "strict separationism" as ever. As for reforming school curricula in a direction more sympathetic to "traditional values," the educational experts have successfully held at bay parents who want a greater say in what their children are taught. Obscenity and

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pornography flourish, and 1.5 million abortions are obtained each year as a matter of secure constitutional right. Despite a temporary setback here or there, "steadily and surely, the gay rights cause is carrying the day." Sure, Frum allows, Christian conservatives have won some school board seats and captured Republican organizations in a few states, "but when they venture into bigger races, they get clobbered." The real power of the religious right? Zilch, or so close to zilch as to make no difference.

Frum adds for good measure: "The Christian right has not done much better wielding power indirectly. Has there been a network news report sympathetic to its point of view? What large corporation worries about its image in the evangelical community? How many senators and governors regard the religious right as anything more than a nuisance to be managed?" If one agrees with Frum's answers to these questions, one might agree also with his judgment that "by the end of the '94 electoral cycle we're going to cease to read so much about the Christian right: those who compose it will have returned, if unhappily, to their old position as auxiliaries of the Republic Party and secular conservatism."

How do I disagree with David Frum? Let me count the ways, or at least a few of them. First, Frum misleadingly forces a sharp tension, even antithesis, between economic and social conservatives. In fact, and with few exceptions, social conservatives are also economic conservatives—suspicious of Big Government, favoring lower taxes and less government regulation, and supportive of the market economy. Apart from the increasingly isolated radical libertarians, economic conservatives are more sympathetic than liberals of any stripe to the issues of the social conservatives. Conservatives hold in common the conviction that ordinary people know best how to run their lives; within some broadly agreed limits of law and decency, government should get out of the way and let people get on with it. There is a tension, to be sure, on the question of abortion. But the studies suggest that conservatives of all stripes are more in favor of the legal protection of the unborn than are liberals of all stripes, and that Americans as a whole are for much more protection than is permitted under the abortion regime of *Roe v. Wade* and its judicial offspring.

An Auxiliary With Clout

Second, Frum treats the religious right as a distinct political party, as though its becoming an auxiliary of the Republican Party would be proof of its failure. We emphatically do not speak for the religious right, and no doubt there are leaders in that movement who have a vested interest in keeping the focus on themselves as independent political players. But many who support the general program associated with the religious right might view it as a great success if public attention to the religious right declines because that program is being effectively advanced under the banner of one of the major parties. There is nothing so bad about being an auxiliary, if your group is an effective, even controlling, auxiliary.

The National Education Association and other government employee unions, along with feminist and homosexual rights organizations, constitute an exceedingly powerful, frequently controlling, auxiliary in the Democratic Party. That reality does not usually occasion excited media attention; it is considered the normal state of affairs among Democrats. Of course, one reason it does not occasion excited media attention is that the media powers-that-be tend to approve of feminism, gay advocacy, state monopoly of funding for education, and expanded government employment. In other words, those who belong to what might with as much justice be called the "secular left" as Christian conservatives are called the "religious right" are quite happy to be auxiliaries of one of the major parties. They do not think they have failed, nor should they. In time, the media may come to recognize as normal the influence of religious conservatives in the Republican Party, even though they do not approve of it. Then, as Mr. Frum says, we will "cease to read so much about the Christian right." Good.

As to whether big league politicians view the religious right as no more than "a nuisance to be managed," there are nuisances and then there are nuisances. When elections typically turn on two or three percentage points, coalitions commanding the allegiance of millions of voters nationally and large minorities at the state and local levels will indeed have to be "managed" (read appeased, neutralized, won over) by politicians who wish to gain or keep office. If Mr. Frum is telling us that the religious right by itself does not and will not determine the outcome of most elections, that is not very interesting. The same can be said of any other identifiable sector of the electorate.

Major politicians know that some questions must be "managed" with exceeding care. Most Republican leaders know, for instance, that it would be political suicide for the party to alienate the pro-life electorate (which, of course, is by no means coterminous with those voters who identify with the "religious right"). It could nonetheless do that, of course, in which case hypothetical scenarios about third and fourth parties (perhaps including Ross Perot Redux) become considerably less hypothetical, with electoral consequences beyond anyone's powers of prediction.

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A Changing World

Third (for those who are counting), consider the list of questions on which Frum claims the secular liberals have won hands down. There has in fact been significant movement on church-state law. The Court has moved in the last decade or more from an almost insouciantly assumed extreme separationism to self-confessed confusion—and uneasiness about having gone too far in inhibiting the free exercise of religion. The remedy of its errors is not yet in sight, but, if one may be permitted a personal reference, the argument of *The Naked Public Square* was considered iconoclastic in 1984, while today it is regularly heard in influential circles of our legal and political culture, including the courts.

Frum is right about the importance of writing "a solid legal brief." It appears to have escaped his notice that today there are a number of increasingly high-powered legal defense organizations litigating religious freedom and other items on the conservative agenda, whereas ten years ago there were none. I once asked the late Leo Pfeffer, the American Jewish Congress' great champion of extreme separationism, why he thought he had won so many cases before the Supreme Court. He smiled and responded, "Because there was nobody on the other side." That wasn't quite true then, but it is certainly not true now, and it will be even less true in the years ahead.

It may be a very long time before the religious right is able to command lawyer-power comparable to that of the ACLU or Planned Parenthood, and it may never happen. But with remarkable alacrity, religious conservatives are learning to wage the war of legal briefs. One views that with some ambivalence, since, by joining in making the courts the locus of contention, conservatives may inadvertently reinforce the liberal pattern of moving the country ever farther away from democratic self-governance to government by the judiciary. It is worrying that few in the religious right seem to be worrying about that. And those who do worry about it invoke the maxim about fighting fire with fire, which is not easy to answer.

With Victories Like These

As for the rights of parents in educating their children, surely Mr. Frum should have noticed the many initiatives for school choice, the rapidly growing practice of home schooling, state experiments with charter schools, and successful efforts in several states to turn back grabs for government control (through teacher certification and the like) of nongovernmental schools. Not without reason do the National Education Association and related interests feel that they are on the defensive as more and more parents refuse to surrender their responsibilities in education to "the experts." Educational reform as envisioned by many who support the religious right has hardly been achieved, but the terms of the debate have been dramatically changed in the last ten years. And again, those who favor that change are by no means limited to those who identify with the religious right.

In tones almost gleeful, Frum observes that the religious right has lost on obscenity. After enormous fuss about government funding of crucifixes immersed in urine and similar instances of artistic creativity, says Frum, "All the NEA artists blackballed by the Bush Administration have jumped back on the public payroll. If the Christian right couldn't win that one, it can't win anything." The claim does not bear examination. That an Administration elected with 43 percent of the vote is spending a few million dollars on the more bizarre antics of adolescent artists (some of them quite elderly) hardly indicates the triumph of the hard-core adversary culture. No more than Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders' celebration of the joys of gay sex indicates the triumph of the homosexual movement. The Clinton Administration has done many things egregiously offensive to the religious right and, it seems likely, to the majority of Americans. Frum is right in observing that those who opposed Clinton were defeated by his election. But each new offense committed by the Administration should not be counted as an additional defeat. They might more accurately be described as actions by which a severely crippled Administration is crippling itself yet further.

Included on Frum's list is the putative fact that "the gay rights cause is carrying the day." Possibly so, but if it does so it will be by judicial imposition and not by popular consent or legislative action. With respect to homosexuality, as with so much else, Americans are a very tolerant people, but where the question is legal recognition of homosexuals as a victim class entitled to affirmative redress, quota preferences, etc., the line has been drawn wherever the public has had a chance to express itself. Moreover, there is slight evidence that the gay rights cause, as defined by its advocates, is carrying the day when it comes to societal acceptance of homogenital sex as morally neutral behavior. Ask almost any parent. Ask the officers of the Presbyterian Church (USA) or the ELCA Lutherans.

"Winning" On Abortion

Then there is, in a category all by itself, abortion. Frum writes that the supporters of legalized abortion "know they're winning." Where are they winning? They won with the *Roe* decision of 1973. By the *Casey* decision of 1992, while the Court still found a constitutional right to abortion, only two of the nine justices were prepared to say that *Roe* was rightly decided. Twenty-three years after every

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institution of Frum's vaunted political elite had declared the abortion question "settled," it is the most unsettled question in our public life. Study after study confirms that no more than 17 percent of the people support the abortion regime imposed by *Roe*, which is in fact, if not in name, abortion on demand. The factor, absolutely the only factor, sustaining the present regime is the Supreme Court. Any submission of this question to the democratic process will almost certainly result in significant legal protection for unborn children.

The pro-choice leadership knows that any movement toward a democratic "accommodation" can only be in the pro-life direction. One expects that Mr. Frum knows that, too.

He correctly notes the analogy with the struggle over slavery, but I believe he draws the wrong lessons from it. He suggests that the violence employed by a few frustrated opponents of abortion indicates that they know their cause is lost. There are striking similarities between our circumstance and the 1850s, when the slavery abolitionists were confronted by the *Dred Scott* regime which was supported by both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. Today's abortion abolitionists may, as Frum says, "sense they are losing" in what he calls the "elitist business" of American politics, but those elites have to know that they have lost with the American people.

Only two institutional centers of leadership stood against the 1973 "settlement" endorsed by the entire American establishment—the Catholic Church and, later but very effectively, the captains of evangelical Protestantism. Today those two centers of leadership are more united and determined than ever on abortion. All the research demonstrates that the pro-life side can only gain and the pro-choice side can only lose by the public becoming better informed about existing abortion law and practice. This question simply will not go away. As the courts continue to stifle the politics of democratic action, we continue to head toward a constitutional crisis every bit as ominous as the conflict over slavery. "Abortion retains its status as a constitutionally guaranteed right," says Frum with great assurance. The same could be said of slaveholding in 1857.

Off the Political Screen

Fifth, finally, and critical to his entire argument, Frum confuses "the religious right" with a cultural sea change much broader, deeper, and harder to understand than anything that shows up on the screens of everyday political analysis. The organizations that define "the religious right"—Moral Majority, Religious Roundtable, Christian Coalition—come and go. They are epiphenomenal; they give expression to and sometimes exploit a religiously informed cultural conservatism that is in motion and commotion on every front. What is called the religious right is a recent arrival. Moral Majority, now defunct, was little more than Jerry Falwell's bully pulpit. Christian Coalition, a much more serious political enterprise, is barely five years old. The deeper motion and commotion, on the other hand, has been steadily building for more than twenty-five years.

Fundamental realignments—political, cultural, religious—are nothing new in American history (see Lyman Kellstadt et al., "It's the Culture, Stupid: 1992 and Our Political Future," FT, April 1994). An important aspect of the present realignment is provocatively analyzed in Christopher Lasch's posthumous book, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, just published by Norton. At least since the 1960s (although Lasch thinks the beginning can be traced back to the 1920s), America's elites have taken a decided turn away from the very idea of democratic governance. The notion has gained ascendancy, says Lasch, that ordinary people are not competent to govern themselves; government is the business of experts who have escaped the prejudices—most especially the religious prejudices—of the majority of Americans. Among such elites, "democracy" means chiefly upward mobility, the opportunity to liberate oneself from the common folk and join the superior company of those who are in charge of things.

Lasch's analysis is disturbing and persuasive, but one must go a step further. The unhappy circumstance he describes is reinforced by the fact that dominantly liberal and secular elites are no longer capable of providing, or are not willing to provide, a philosophical rationale for democratic governance. The "revolt of the elites" is not simply the result of ambition or snobbishness or disillusionment with the experience of democratic politics. As a generality, our societal leadership despairs of making the case for the *truths* that historically undergirded democratic governance. The Declaration of Independence, *The Federalist*, Tocqueville, Lincoln—all are still ordinarily honored as adornments of the American experience. But their words are not engaged for what they are—practical, moral, and philosophical *arguments* for this constitutional experiment in self-government.

To be sure, there are those who address these questions. But, however brilliant, the political philosophy of people such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin produces little more than conceptual contrivances that make for interesting conversation among a few academics who are interested in that kind of thing. There is today no project comparable to John Dewey's valiant but flawed efforts to make a moral and philosophical, even religious, case for democracy. And what is left of Dewey's legacy is claimed by Richard Rorty and other "liberal ironists" whose contempt for the American people—particularly for their moral and

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religious sensibilities—could not be made more crassly clear.

Frum says that the religious conservatives are "good populists," and there is a lot to that. Joined to it must be the capacity to make effective arguments for popular government. The development of that capacity among politically conservative Christian and Jewish thinkers has not been conspicuously successful to date. With few exceptions, there has been little advance on the arguments set out by the likes of John Courtney Murray and Reinhold Niebuhr a half century ago. In addition, there is a not unimportant sector of the religious right today that believes that the whole idea of democracy is misbegotten, that America must be reconstituted on the basis of "Bible Law." Nonetheless, it may be that Dewey's hope for a "common faith" that can sustain and invigorate democracy has at last appeared. It turns out to be the Judeo-Christian construction of reality, or what most people identify as the biblical tradition. Unlike Dewey's proposed new religion, and unlike the academic artifacts of people such as Dworkin and Rawls, this tradition has a remarkably strong popular base, which is a great advantage when the question at hand is government by the people. More than nine out of ten Americans profess allegiance to the moral tradition called Judeo-Christian, or at least more allegiance than they profess to any other way of trying to make moral sense of the world.

Nonetheless, Frum's elites are indeed formidable. Christopher Lasch leaves one with the doleful intimation that the revolt may be permanent, that the jig may be up with an experiment that is no longer attractive or convincing to those who have the responsibility to care for it. There is another possible future, however. The cultural reconfiguration that is made politically visible, in part, by the religious right could produce an explosion of argument about the idea and practice of democracy. That much of the argument will be marked by religious conviction will make it difficult for secularized elites for whom upward mobility has meant liberation from religion, or at least liberation from having to deal with religion in public. They will publish articles on the theme of "Where Religion Fits in American Politics," and will ponder most gravely whether, or on what terms, these passionate social conservatives should be admitted to the circle of The People Who Run Things. If our reading of this historical moment has any merit, observers ten or twenty years from now will be puzzled, and perhaps amused, that these editors and writers seemed to think that they were still in charge of admissions.

FT

Turning a Blind Eye

The United Nations conference in Cairo on population and development was a very big setback for the Clinton Administration and a very considerable success for the Vatican, which demonstrated its singular capacity to evoke a measure of moral reflection in the international arena. A forthcoming issue will carry a detailed and very lively report on what happened in and around the Cairo meeting. One possible irony is that U.S. feminists who established the theme of "empowerment of women" may have removed from center stage the Paul Ehrlichs, Garrett Hardins, and groups advocating a hard-nosed coercive approach to controlling population. While the feminists may have effected a "paradigm shift" in the rhetoric, however, it is likely that the massive funding that Cairo called for will still go to the coercive controllers.

The proponents of the myth of the "population bomb" are determined, as is evident in the reflections of liberal columnist Nicholas von Hoffman. He writes, "So it won't be long before the Coast Guard will be machine-gunning people trying to float in here on rafts, whether or not the new arrivals are desirable (and however one defines that word). There simply are too many people in the world. If they're all allowed into Jonathan Edwards' shining city on a hill, the place will turn into Slumtown, U.S.A., the new Bangladesh. Even at present rates, the American population will grow to a sickening 383 million within the lifetimes of today's high school students." We should have learned by now, says von Hoffman. "For 150 years, men like Robert Malthus and Charles Darwin have been writing that we hairless apes would f___ ourselves into extinction. Unhappily, other voices, men such as Karl Marx and an endless succession of Popes, have written otherwise, to the great confusion of the gullible and unthinking." (One word edited.)

He writes that "only a few optimists are left who believe the human population will level off of its own accord." "Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, murdering day and night for half a century, didn't make a dent. All the wars of this bloody age haven't stemmed the procreational tide. AIDS offers no hope. Even the much discussed spread of homosexuality, while perhaps an encouraging development, has yet to put a discernible crimp in the birth rates." The Pope, "who ought to know better," says the rich nations can help the poor to share in the benefits of productivity. That, says von Hoffman, is unrealistic. "Anyway, Mr. Pope, get real—politically it ain't gonna happen." People worry about coercive measures, but freedom "may be a luxury that only low birth-rate societies can enjoy." In the face of the population crisis, von Hoffman proposes the

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creation of "Bobbitt Squads to ferret out and fix human males with a rooster complex who can't get it through their heads that insemination is a criminal, antisocial act."

The U.S. should cut off food and medicine to societies that lag in population control. Von Hoffman admits that "we'll need a strong stomach to turn a blind eye to the means used to bring birth and death statistics into balance," but he reminds us that "this fight is for the survival of our species." Of course strong-stomached folk like Nicholas von Hoffman are hysterical and ill-informed, but they are not without very considerable influence. And, as aforesaid, despite the changes brought about in the original U.S.-backed proposals for Cairo, the big funding is still scheduled to go to the proponents of turning a blind eye to both the plight and the potential of the world's poor.

FT

REDISCOVERING LIBERALISM

Richard Bernstein is a true liberal, which is to say he is a principled opponent of the illiberalism that today passes for liberalism in the worlds of journalism, entertainment, philanthropy, and education, both higher and lower. Which is to say that Richard Bernstein is a neoconservative. Remarkably enough, he has managed to survive as national cultural writer at the *New York Times*. He has now written a book that we recommend very highly, *Dictatorship of Virtue: Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future* (Knopf, 367 pp., $25). It is a marvelously literate and detailed guide to the culture wars being waged on numerous fronts. He dissects the rewriting of history, indeed the turning of history into fiction, in order to bolster ethnic and racial self-esteem, and the ways in which "diversity," under the auspices of the moralistically superior champions of the New Consciousness, has been turned into the systematic censorship and exclusion of any truth that offends political correctitude. *Dictatorship of Virtue* is a polemic, but it is much more than a polemic. It is an intellectually keen analysis of the dynamics of institutions and their vulnerability to ideologies that are advanced in the name of enlightenment and progress. It is also a bracing call to arms against the threat of what Robespierre called the "emanation of virtue."

Bernstein on what happens next: "On the one side, the forces of the New Consciousness are on the rise, and, as George Orwell once pointed out, to be on the rise is an end in itself. 'The object of power is power,' he said in *1984*. 'One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to safeguard the dictatorship.' Certainly, this is true of the dictatorship of virtue. It is propelled by so many forces. There is post-1960s disillusionment; there are rising expectations; there is a general inclination in liberal-democratic societies to find fault in the large historical forces, rather than in individual acts of irresponsibility. There is the normal human propensity toward a foolish zealousness. There is the yearning for community that the sociologists are always telling us about. You read the journals with their boilerplate about 'genuinely oppositional education,' and you sense that much of what is politically correct stems from a desire to win the admiration of the rest of the New Consciousness cohort, to belong to the club. And there is also the American infatuation with the new. Susan Haack, a professor of philosophy at the University of Miami, explained to me the power that novelty has in academic life. 'If somebody submits an idea saying that she, or he, is going to do research that radically changes how we look at our world, how before everything was masculine and white and bourgeois, then that generates excitement. If somebody, more reasonably, comes along and says "I'd like to look into this, and I think that in doing so I might make a modest change in our vision of things," that generates less excitement. The first is far more likely to win a research grant than the second.'

"Above all, perhaps, the New Consciousness senses that it is gaining power, and that alone is reason for its existence in the first place. Indeed, to come close to power takes a good deal of the risk out of an enterprise that presents itself as inherently risky. The fact is that assaulting the establishment, declaiming against the racism and sexism of society, reiterating the approved phrases about oppression and exclusion, promising to uncover previously neglected worlds, these require not a jot of courage these days. These are the sanctioned activities of the counterestablishment, the gestures and idioms that gain approval and lead to good opportunities, to jobs, to prizes, to book contracts, to prominence in American life. It takes no bravery to be a multiculturalist. There is no risk in smashing the icons. There are millions of dollars in foundation grants available for people who claim they are doing so.

"Indeed, courage is now required to transgress the dictatorship of virtue. That is perhaps the greatest of the multicultural-politically correct victories. The upholders of the dictatorship of virtue have put the other side on the defensive."

But, ultimately, Bernstein believes that the other side, his side, the liberal side, will prevail. The immoderation of the Robespierres and the certainty that their panaceas will not solve but will only exacerbate the problems they address so

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wrongheadedly will finally do them in. "The pendulum will swing eventually in the other direction." But not before the mandarins of the New Consciousness do a great deal more damage. True liberals today, he says, need to take their cue from the likes of Irving Howe, Sidney Hook, and George Orwell, who dared to do battle against an earlier totalitarianism.

"It is not that we face a danger equivalent to theirs. We can be thankful that we do not. And yet the stakes are high enough, involving as they do our ability to tell the truth, to believe that there is a truth to be told, to provide the means to get ahead to those who most need it, and to encourage people to have self-esteem, not via ethnic boosterism, but by taking responsibility for their own lives. The time has come for liberals to recapture the high ground from the demagogues of diversity, to declare their diversity fake, fraudulent, superstitious, cranky, sanctimonious, monotonous. It is time to reaffirm the greatest engine of genuine diversity that the world has ever known, which is the liberal-democratic society sustained by a set of concepts now dismissed as the narratives of the people in charge."

Dictatorship of Virtue is, as the reader may have gathered by now, a book with an attitude. It is also intelligent, informative, and, despite all, a great encouragement. Not the least of its merits is its sympathetic telling of the story of citizens all over the country who have stood up to the tyranny of PC and have prevailed. If enough people read and act upon Richard Bernstein's argument, who knows what might happen? Retiring the neoconservative number, we might resume the liberal jersey for the innings ahead. But that is getting way, way ahead of the game.

FT

The Revolution That Wasn't

1993 was the year of gay and lesbian advocacy. There was President Clinton's promotion of homosexuals in the military, the great gay march on Washington, cover stories in almost every national publication, network programs galore, and a number of books aimed at "mainlining" the gay subculture. All the stops were pulled and gay advocacy reached a crescendo made noisier by the conservative discovery of homosexuality as an issue ripe for political exploitation. 1994 has been something of a disappointment for the partisans of the gay cause. Not, of course, that they do not continue to work hard through the courts and educational establishments to advance their views and secure goals such as legal victim status and same-sex marriage. But there is no evidence of a groundswell of change in popular attitudes or political support.

A particular mortification was the complete fizzle of John Boswell's long-awaited book on the putative history of Christian blessing of homosexual marriage, a fizzle for which some associated with this journal are pleased to accept a large measure of blame. Outside the subcultural press, the book has, to the best of our knowledge, received not one favorable notice, and most have been devastatingly dismissive of Boswell's erudition in the service of ideology. Even in the more liberal churches, efforts to obtain endorsement of homogenital behavior seem to be blocked for the foreseeable future. Only on the campuses is the semblance of the continuing revolution sustained.

The movement's frustration is evident also in the increasingly incoherent lines of argument being advanced by various organizations. For instance, a recent study conducted by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health has been hailed as a great breakthrough by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The study suggests that almost one-fifth of Americans have been attracted to someone of the same sex at some time since age fifteen. The Task Force declares that "these figures are significantly higher than last year's study by researchers at the Battelle Human Affairs Research Center that reported only 2 percent of men surveyed had ever engaged in same-sex sexual behavior, and one percent identified themselves as exclusively gay."

Perhaps so and perhaps not. Tom W. Smith, a statistician at the University of Chicago, says of the Harvard study, "They basically asked whether you were ever attracted to a member of the same sex at any time since you were age 15—which can mean one very fleeting, very trivial sensation or feeling which may have never been acted upon and may never have been felt again in the next 30 or 40 years of your life." David Wypij, who helped direct the study in question, says, "Our perspective is that sexual orientation isn't just a yes-no, heterosexual-homosexual question. I think in most individuals there is some sort of range. You may be more heterosexual, you may be more homosexual."

The Harvard study—conducted in cooperation with the Center for Health Policy Studies in Washington and published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*—tends to confirm what most people intuitively think to be the case. A substantial number of people (many more males than females) have at some time felt a sexual attraction to someone of the same sex. A small minority, perhaps 2 percent, have at some time given in to that impulse, while perhaps as many as one percent give in regularly, claiming that it is the only form of sexual expression they

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desire or of which they are capable. It is hard to know why gay and lesbian advocates champion these findings. The research, which highlights the often confused fluidity of sexual desire and action, undercuts claims of genetic or other fixed determinants of homosexual behavior. Of critical importance on the legal front, it undercuts the claim that the homogenitally active are a "class" in a way comparable to the legal definition of class defined by reference to race or gender.

The reality would seem to be that some are tempted to a certain behavior, most resist the temptation, a few succumb to it, and a very few surrender themselves to it in a manner so complete as to constitute their "identity," their most basic sense of who they are. It is well to remember that all of us live under the judgment and under the mercy of God, and that homosexuality is by no means the most damning of the disorders to which sinful human beings are prone. But such sympathetic understanding is not what gay advocates were hoping for and expecting from what they declared to be the Revolution of 1993. The sense of disappointment has to be severe. A year later, it would seem that both popular and scholarly opinion about homosexuality is more settled, and settled along traditional lines, than it has been for some time. Of course that will not prevent judges and university administrators, who are admirably situated to ignore both scholarly evidence and democratic opinion, to ally themselves with determined activists in continuing to press the revolution that wasn't.

FT

A SENSE OF HEIGHTENED EXPECTATION

A most instructive visit to Rome (in the company of George Weigel, no stranger to our readers) at the end of September perhaps warrants a word. One purpose of the trip was to promote the Italian editions of Weigel's *The Final Revolution* and my *Doing Well and Doing Good*, both of which have just been brought out by Mondadori, Italy's largest publishing house. That involved many press conferences, and seminars in Naples and Milan, as well as Rome. The focus, of course, was on Catholic social teaching, with which Italian journalists and intellectuals are much more familiar than their American counterparts. On the other hand, it is by no means evident that they have seriously engaged the arguments advanced by this pontificate, especially in the encyclicals *Centesimus Annus* and *Veritatis Splendor*.

In Italy, even more than here, it is difficult to make any theological or philosophical assertion without having people read into it all kinds of political designs. About the complexities of the maddeningly confused politics of Italy, I repeatedly had to insist upon my innocence born of ignorance. Michael Novak joined us for the book promotion part of the visit, Mondadori having brought out his *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* at the same time. Italians take great delight in conspiracy theories, and there was much speculation in the press about this "American intellectual invasion." The far left perceived the tentacles of American capitalism reaching out to bring Italy under the U.S. imperium, while the far right viewed us as doubtful Catholics insinuating the insidious doctrines of secular liberalism. For the most part, however, the arguments we made were respectfully, and sometimes enthusiastically, received.

It was repeatedly remarked that this was something quite new, since in Italy it had almost always been assumed that Catholic social teaching is pitted against liberal democracy. Italy did not have a Father John Courtney Murray, the Jesuit thinker who worked through the connections between Catholicism and the free society in this country, a thinker whose legacy some of us are eager to foster. The possibilities of Catholic teaching in support of the free and virtuous society were strikingly evident in the seminar at the Vatican which included Rocco Buttiglione, a philosopher who has been a student and collaborator of the Pope's for many years and who is now trying to rethink and reconstitute the Christian Democratic tradition in Italian politics. Participating as well was Carlo Scognamiglia, the speaker of the Senate, and for some reason this piqued most particular interest in the press and among political observers in Rome. As aforesaid, I know next to nothing about Italian politics. We were simply setting forth some general arguments, but it was rather fun to see the sundry political and ideological uses to which they were put.

The most important purpose of the visit was to touch base with various officials in the Vatican on matters ecumenical, ecclesiastical, and theological. In extended conversations with such as Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and Cardinal Cassidy who heads the council on Christian unity, intense and supportive interest was expressed in, among other things, our various initiatives to bring together Catholics and evangelical Protestants. This is clearly a question of great importance to the Holy See as it looks forward to the reconfiguration of the Christian reality in the Third Millennium. There was also extended and wide-ranging conversation with the Holy Father.

While such meetings are by no means secret, what

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is said in such meetings is privileged. However, I can say that, apart from a very painful hip that makes it exceedingly difficult for him to walk, the Pope seemed to be in fine, even robust, health. The visit was precisely at the time when the international press was filled with chatter about his impending demise and the usual idle speculation about who might succeed him. The Holy Father was vigorous, candid, expansive, humorous, self-deprecating, and clearly in command of the many subjects he addressed. He powerfully evinces the sense of heightened expectation that attends being radically open to the direction of God. Catholics believe that he is Peter among us, and in his presence it seems quite self-evidently so. In any event, there is every reason to believe and hope that this Pope will lead the Church into the Third Millennium.

Herewith a few impressions that may be of interest. They are but my impressions, for whatever they're worth. One has the very distinct sense that Rome believes it is on the verge of reestablishing communion with the Orthodox churches of the East—Russian, Greek, Ukrainian, and other. That communion between East and West was broken in 1054, and it may be that, as the Second Millennium was the millennium of Christian division, so the Third Millennium will be the millennium of Christian unity.

On the Western front, there have been disappointing setbacks in some ecumenical relations, especially with the Anglicans, but there can be no question about the long-term resolve of Rome's ecumenical commitment. As mentioned above, there is great interest in developing relations with evangelical Protestants here and around the world, joined to a sober recognition that the time for serious consideration of ecclesial unity with evangelicals is very far in the future, if indeed it ever arrives. But if one asks what is the top priority for this pontificate in the years ahead, the answer, I believe, is Christian unity. It is rumored that there will shortly be a major document, perhaps an encyclical, on Christian unity, possibly before the much awaited encyclical on respect for human life. The most dramatic evidence of heightened ecumenical expectations, however, is what appears to be the approaching restoration of communion with the East. The historic stumbling block for the Eastern churches has been the question of papal jurisdiction, and it now seems that Rome has determined that unity is more important than jurisdiction.

One may date the first chapter of this pontificate from 1978 to 1989, the latter year marking the collapse of communism. In that period the Pope was perceived as facing East and was tolerated, even cherished, by the Western powers as an ally in the struggle against Marxist totalitarianism. Now he is seen to be facing toward the West, and his moral and spiritual challenge might not be so welcome. In this connection, one must count the Vatican's role at the United Nations Cairo conference on population and development to be a great success. Of course this reading directly contradicts the story peddled by most of the American and international press, in which the Vatican was featured as little more than an obstructionist nuisance. In fact, the Clinton Administration was foiled in its intention to use the conference to establish abortion on demand as an international right—and, denials to the contrary, that was among the stated purposes of the Administration. On abortion and other questions, the Vatican employed persuasive argument and astute parliamentary strategy to effect striking changes in the original American-sponsored designs for the conference. For the present, one simply notes that Cairo supports the heightened expectations for the Vatican's singular role as a catalyst for moral deliberation in the international arena. Also important in this connection is the forging of new working relationships with a number of Muslim centers of influence. This also touches on changing religious configurations for the next century, changes in which the remarkable developments in relation to Judaism, the community of our "elder brothers," are critically important.

In the post-1989 second chapter of this pontificate, some journalists and other observers have recklessly speculated that there is a pulling back from *Centesimus Annus* and its strong endorsement of the free economy in a free and virtuous society. According to these speculations, Rome is so appalled by the decadence that has accompanied freedom in the former Communist states that it is casting longing eyes back to the good old days of socialism. In discussions with persons at various levels of authority, such speculation meets with amused incredulity. *Centesimus Annus* highlights the complex relationship between the cultural, the political, and the economic, and recognizes that no earthly social order will ever get the connections exactly right; always and everywhere, short of the Kingdom Come, there will be very real problems. But there is no doubt whatever that this pontificate vigorously champions the teaching of *Centesimus Annus* and is strongly appreciative of bishops, theologians, and others who have accurately communicated that teaching.

In sum, on this visit to Rome I was struck by a sense of heightened expectations. Nothing enthusiastic, mind you, but a quiet confidence that, in the mysterious purposes of God, great and good things are afoot. It has to do with the fast approaching Third Millennium, no doubt. It may also have to do with catching a second breath after the momentous events that closed the first chapter of this pontificate in 1989. And it has to do with the perception that, while dissent and confusion still

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abound in many quarters, the momentum has shifted toward the authentic teaching of the Church's faith. In this regard, the remarkable response to the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, not least in the U.S., has been a tonic. These and other factors figure into, but do not explain, the remarkable spirit of hopefulness. The explanation, at least some of us are convinced, would require an extended reflection on the curious ways of the Holy Spirit.

FT

DEEPER MEANINGS, SORT OF

Where were you when you heard that JFK was killed? It's likely half our readers weren't born yet. But there are these events, usually tragic, that are supposed to congeal the sense of national community by indelibly imprinting a moment on the collective mind. Like that long chase of O. J. Simpson in his Ford Bronco. Where were you? It seems that all but a dozen of us were transfixed in front of the television. It seems that way, but one may be permitted to doubt it. Admittedly, this writer is hopelessly out of it, but I not only did not see the chase, I haven't watched one program or had one conversation with anyone about the Simpson affair. Yes, one hears passing remarks about the nation being obsessed with the matter, and you can't help but note the many stories about it in the paper as you flip through what certainly does not require your attention. Actually, I think we are being put on. I am sure there are many, many more than a dozen of us who have remained quite impervious to the clamor, aside from opining, if anyone asks (no one has), that of course someone might get away with murder if he can pay five or ten million for his defense, and there is nothing very new about that.

Confession time. I read one of the O. J. Simpson stories, by Anne Applebaum in the London *Spectator*—because Ms. Applebaum is fun to read, and because it is an O. J. Simpson story about the O. J. Simpson stories, so I thought maybe I could catch up on what I had not missed by so cavalierly flipping through the paper. Ms. Applebaum is of the view that in today's America a murder is never just a murder, at least when a celebrity is involved; it is an excuse for national self-examination. And what remarkable self-examinations there have been. Through the prism of O. J.'s crime (alleged), it seems we are finding out all kinds of things about race, class, celebritydom, sports, sexual dysfunction, and failing marriages. Maybe there's even a religion angle, although it did not show up on Ms. Applebaum's screen.

She does note the Harvard psychiatrist in the *Washington Post* who says, "It certainly seems to me that in dealing with O. J. Simpson the media has been portraying him as a wife-abuser and a violent person, and negatively digging up his past." Ms. Applebaum thinks it difficult to be positive about a past that indicates the man is a wife-abuser and violent person. Also in the *Post*, a black businessman expressed concern that "this is yet another opportunity to bring an African American down hard," while a political activist declares that "anybody who commits a crime like this is someone who obviously is a victim." It follows, sort of.

Some years ago the writer Joan Didion noticed the strain of self-centeredness that runs through the American media culture. "Where are we heading?" she was asked on a book tour. "'Where are we heading?' they asked in all the television and radio studios. . . . Quite often they wondered not just where we were heading but where we were heading 'as Americans' or 'as concerned Americans' or 'as American women' or, on one occasion, 'as the American guy and the American woman.' I never did learn the answer." What does the O. J. Simpson case tell us about ourselves? What should we learn about who *we* are and what *we* have done?

Anne Applebaum finds it hard to take. "In America, the use of terms borrowed from psychoanalysis is so widespread—popularized by countless self-help books and talk-show hosts with therapy training—that it no longer seems odd that the whole society should be held accountable for a single crime. America's aggression may well have needed to work itself out; America's forgotten childhood traumas may need to be unearthed; an incident in America's life ought to be examined, in order to understand America's deeper problem. This, is after all, a country whose political commentators sometimes refer to Yugoslavia as a 'dysfunctional country,' as if it were a family, and a country whose President uses his emotions to justify policy decisions ('I feel good about the bombing,' was one memorable Clinton remark). . . . It is therefore hardly surprising that a celebrity murder is also received by the American public as an occasion for national soul-searching and an investigation of racism—the great national personality disorder—rather than as a time to evaluate the facts, decide whether the celebrity in question is guilty or not, and perhaps also decide to discuss racism later on, in a more appropriate context. . . . After all, if O. J. did do it, that would not be unexpected: men kill their wives every day, it is the commonest sort of crime. If he did not do it, his plight is hardly different from that of thousands of other people, black and white, also falsely accused of a crime. Perhaps there is nothing to make sense of, nothing deeper to understand, no racial overtones, no implications for society at large. Perhaps the outcome of this trial

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will not affect 'where we are going, as Americans.' But if that were the case, then there will be nothing to talk about in America this autumn."

Well. It certainly makes those of us who have not been paying attention feel better. ("I feel good about ignoring it.") Although Ms. Applebaum is no comfort to those commentators, including, we have no doubt, quite a few preachers, who seized upon the O. J. affair to exercise their expertise in the deeper meanings department. We had trouble enough during those turbulent days pondering the Yankees. What does it say about us as Americans when the baseball owners and players of all the other teams close down the game rather than allow the Yankees to win the World Series?

FT

While We're At It

■ "Do you believe Jesus is God?" "No," says Bishop John Spong (Episcopalian) of Newark, but "I do believe something of him was perfectly transparent to God." (He did not specify which part of Jesus might be transparent.) The statement prompted a reader of the *Christian Challenge*, which styles itself "The Only Worldwide Voice of Traditional Anglicanism," to come up with some revised titles for favorite hymns: "Clearer My God Through Thee," "Glass of Ages, Cleaned for Me," and "Joyful Joyful, We See Through Thee." Oh, those Anglicans.

■ S. Robert Lichter is codirector of the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington, and coauthor with Stanley Rothman of the much discussed study *The Media Elite*. The findings of that study as it pertains to religion and the media have been discussed in these pages (see Stanley Rothman, "Religion's Bad Press," January 1994). Recently Lichter testified at a U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hearing on religious discrimination, meaning discrimination against the religious. He discussed the overwhelming evidence that religious commitment is a "key variable" in predicting attitudes on a host of public policy questions, and noted the dramatic gap between the media elite and the general public with respect to religious commitment. Questioned by Commissioner Robert George, Lichter acknowledged that the religiously committed are largely excluded from the higher reaches of media leadership. Lichter said, "Certainly the entire logic that is applied to diversity efforts in terms of race and gender should be equally applicable in terms of religion. If you are talking about something that is, for most people, extremely central to their lives, their conceptions of their existence, and often is a matter of something you are born into, in a way, it is the family training almost as much as a personal, physical characteristic, so I think the same conclusion applies. That is, if these people remain what sociologists like to call 'the other,' someone terra incognita, then you are unlikely to see them working their way up through an organization until they become more familiar or more ordinary to the other people in that organization. That is the same thing that African-Americans, Hispanics, women, and so forth have gone through." George observed that religion "doesn't seem to be treated as an issue in diversity, even among people who are in roles that give them responsibility for promoting diversity within their organizations." George asked Lichter how he would advise an undergraduate who aspired to go to the top in print or broadcast journalism if the student had a resume that included, among many other activities, his membership in the Evangelical Christian Fellowship. Would you advise him to omit any mention of that? Lichter: "I would say leave it off, just as twenty years ago, if you were a member of a gay rights organization, I would have said leave it off." Affirmative action and quotas is the wrong way to go for the religiously committed as it is the wrong way to go for people defined by race, gender, or sexual proclivity. But the above exchange is telling and troubling, underscoring the incoherence and dishonesty in much that is pushed under the banner of "diversity." Commissioner George and his colleagues render a real service by focusing the attention of the Civil Rights Commission on discrimination against religion and the religious, i.e., discrimination against the great majority of Americans.

■ The building of coalitions is frequently premised upon the axiom that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. As often as not, this produces strange bedfellows, so to speak, as in the case of the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians. Philip Arcidi is the president of PLAGAL (Box 33292, Washington, D.C. 20033) and has submitted an op-ed piece asserting that "*Roe v. Wade* could ensure the virtual elimination of homosexuals from American society in a generation or two. Perhaps some of the religious right might be tempted to stop picketing abortion clinics for just long enough to complete the holocaust." The reasoning goes like this: "As scientists become more adept at deciphering the DNA codes, they will be able to predict with increasing accuracy whether an unborn child is predisposed to grow up lesbian and gay. As this knowledge becomes more readily available, prospective parents will have to ask themselves if they are willing to assume the challenge of raising a potential gay son or lesbian daughter, or whether they should abort and retry. Sadly, the most liberal-minded couples—even those whose 'best friends'

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may include a gay or lesbian or two—are likely to opt for the latter course." The conclusion would seem to follow: "When members of the homosexual community look at the issue in light of all the facts, it is no longer a question of 'How can you be gay and be against abortion?' It is a question of 'How can you be gay and *favor* abortion?' It is high time that lesbians and gays realized that we of all people have a vested interest in upholding the sanctity of all human life—beginning with the lives of the unborn. Otherwise, we can look forward to a brave new world in which queer bashing starts in the womb." The assumption is that most people, given their druthers, would prefer not to have a child who is likely to be homosexual. The prior assumption is that today's homosexuals have an interest in making sure that there are future generations of homosexuals. That prior assumption is almost certainly not shared by most in the pro-life movement. At the same time, the point of the movement is that all children should be given the chance to live the life that is theirs, along with the attendant risks of living it badly. We have recently received complaints that some gay pro-life activists have been given a very hard time by some non-gay pro-life activists—hate calls late at night and other nastiness. That is, to put it delicately, both dumb and wrong. There are atheists for life and Marxists for life, so why not gays and lesbians for life? Nobody is going to think that the atheists, Marxists, or gays represent the pro-life movement. On the other hand, their public presence plays some modest part in confusing the stereotypes so effectively employed by the opposition. In any event, the question at hand is protecting the unborn, not atheism, Marxism, or homosexuality. There is a time for discussing such errors, and cooperating in pro-life activities can create a measure of trust that makes such discussion possible. In building coalitions, however, it is not, paraphrasing Eliot, the greater treason to encourage people to do the right thing, even if for the wrong reason.

■ In some parts of the world Christians are still being crucified, quite literally so. News agencies report that five Christians have been crucified since July in Sudan, one being an Anglican priest. The detail is supplied that the executioners used six-inch-long nails. In Wad Medani two Catholic converts have been sentenced by an Islamic law court to be crucified. Anglican Bishop Daniel Zindo reports that widows and orphans of slain Christian men are sold into slavery in north Sudan and Libya for $15 per slave. Such behavior does put a strain on hopes for better Christian-Muslim relations.

■ Skirmishes over removing "sexist" or "gender-specific" language from Scripture, liturgy, and Christian teaching continue in many of the churches. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, regrettably in our judgment, is filled with half-measures to pacify feminist advocates. (Hold on to your RSV, still, all things considered, the best English translation to date.) One of the problems with half-measures, such as using only "inclusive" pronouns, is that they satisfy none of the partisans in this dispute. A bigger problem is that they are theologically incoherent and foster incoherence. This is the argument carefully laid out by Alvin F. Kimel, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Highland, Maryland, and Donald Hook, professor of linguistics at Trinity College, Hartford. Their article, first appearing in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, has been made available in pamphlet form. To receive a copy of "The Pronouns of Deity," send one dollar to Mr. John Ott, P.O. Box 268, Largo, FL 34649.

■ One wonders when, in the judgment of certain journalists, prayer would not be "bizarre." The headline in the tabloid *New York Post* shouts, "Judge Thomas' Bizarre Bathroom Prayer Session." The incident cited from Senator John Danforth's book, *Resurrection*, is one in which, before going before the Senate committee to deny the charges of Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, Danforth, and their wives went into a bathroom in the Senate office building to pray together. This, reports the *Post*, is "the book's most bizarre scene." Danforth writes that he put his hands on Thomas' shoulders and said, "Go forth in the name of Christ, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit." Justice Thomas is quoted as saying that he felt "as though I was armed for battle then. I was still scared, but I felt that God was with us." How wacky can you get? This man prays. This man believes that God answers prayer. If that isn't grounds for impeachment, why do we have the ACLU? Under the accompanying picture of Thomas in the *Post* story is the line, "Cried and squirmed." Were it another man, he would likely be applauded for his "vulnerability." Under the picture of Anita Hill is the line "Treated unfairly?" Since there is nothing at all about Anita Hill in the story itself, the point must be that she was treated unfairly because Clarence Thomas gained an undue advantage by praying and getting God on his side. Bizarre is the right word as applied to, not by, the *New York Post*.

■ "We think that using God to sell tennis racquets is inappropriate." So said Matthew Margo, vice president of program practices at CBS, after the network rejected a Chiat/Day ad for Prince tennis racquets that featured God playing tennis. Inappropriate no doubt, but one's theological curiosity is titillated. In the service and return might be possibilities for portraying the relationship among the persons of the immanent Trinity, unless of course the ad pictured Manichaeus in the other court, in which case CBS was right to promptly squelch such heresy. But now it appears the ad will

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never be shown, and so how God might be depicted playing tennis joins a long list of things that we will likely never know. On the other hand, one remains open to the possibility that there is not only a celestial court but also celestial courts.

■ The western states of the U.S. are generally thought to be much less religious, or much more crazily religious, than other parts of the country, and there is an element of truth in both claims. New Ageisms and cult-like Christian spinoffs do flourish there, but a recent Gallup survey indicates that the difference between the West and the rest of the country is not so great as is sometimes thought. In the West (including Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico), 19 percent of adults belong to a Bible study group, whereas the national average is 28 percent. Believing that the Bible is the literal word of God are 21 percent, contrasted with 32 percent nationally. Twenty percent hold that the Bible is a collection of fables and legends, while only 16 percent of all Americans take that view. In the West, 33 percent consider themselves "born again" or "evangelical," whereas the national figure is 42 percent. Forty-eight percent of westerners are Protestant (56 percent nationally), 25 percent are Catholic (26 percent nationally), and 2 percent, the national average, are Jewish. Gallup reports that the Northeast is more liberal than the rest of the country, mainly because only 28 percent of respondents say that they are born again or evangelical. But that is surely explained by the fact that 38 percent of the Northeast is Catholic, and most Catholics are not at home with the born again argot of evangelical Protestantism. The Midwest, from Ohio to Nebraska and Missouri to Minnesota, is the "heartland," and is in sync with the national average on almost every score. So what is the state of faith in the heartland? Average. Neither too much nor too little, neither too hot nor too cold. Laodicea, USA. Not, of course, that the rest of us are likely to get off any easier.

■ "The Politics of the Breast" is an opinion piece in the *New York Times* advocating the right of women to go bare-breasted on the subway. Two years ago the New York Court of Appeals ruled that the state laws against indecent exposure could not be enforced against women who wish to be topless in public. Judge Vito J. Titone wrote that differential treatment of female bodies violated constitutional guarantees of equality and was "rooted in centuries of prejudice and bias toward women." One suspects he meant to say *against* women. A certain delicacy about the display of the female body in public is indeed rooted, apparently from the beginning of the species, in an enthusiastic male prejudice and bias toward naked women. Such considerations seem to carry little weight with the court, however. If human nature and the edicts of the court are in conflict, human nature will just have to change. Mayor Giuliani, being a generally sensible fellow, says the transit police will continue to arrest bare-breasted women on the subway. A police spokesman explains that, in the close press of subway travel, a "very, very attractive" topless woman could create excitements that would pose a public danger. Some subway patrons, he opined, could become so distracted that they might fall down escalators or even onto the tracks. The *Times* writer is buying none of it. She scoffs at the idea that "the power of the female breast is such that it can lure its beholders to untimely demise in subterranean channels." She concludes that the bare-breasted subway rider is making the point "that her breasts belong to her and not to the onlookers." It is not, however, the proprietorship but the public display of the items that is in question. To be fair to the writer, this is a man thing and it is perhaps understandable that she just doesn't get it. Her argument and that of the New York court, however, do helpfully illumine why it is so very difficult to make a case for public decency. The concepts of decency and indecency turn upon what is offensive. Today, unless you are a member of a certified victim group, you have not the right to be offended. If you are offended or, as in this case, aroused, the fault is with you. The fun for the more aggressive members of the certified victim group is to taunt and provoke you into protesting what they say or do, thus confirming that they are victims and you the victimizer. But this is old hat by now. And for all the media chatter about bare-breasted subway riders, we know nobody who has seen one to date. One expects it's not for the lack of looking. In any event, the ancient maxim is again vindicated that those whom the gods would destroy are, if madness be the sign, disproportionately New Yorkers.

■ Here is a note attached to a list of names and addresses asking us to send them a sample copy of First Things with an invitation to subscribe. Which we did. And which reminds us that we haven't suggested for a while that you do the same. Please send names and addresses of your friends who you think should be subscribers and who are likely to subscribe, and we'll send them a free issue and let them know that it is at your suggestion. It costs money, of course, but it is one of the most cost-efficient ways to bring new people on board. And think how grateful your friends will be, maybe.

■ When what was left of Mrs. Clinton's health care scheme was being debated, pro-abortionists expressed confidence that President Clinton would not accept a plan that did not include abortion as a basic health service. Said Pamela J. Maraldo, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, "We are, the pro-choice community, one of the few groups that the Clinton Administration has kept its commitments to, to date." Her view of Clinton puts one in mind of FDR's reported

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response to criticism of a crooked Latin American politician, "He may be an S.O.B., but he's our S.O.B."

■ The people at Sophia Press had this great idea of bringing together in one handsome volume the best poetry on the birth of Christ. There are what some may think unlikely entries by Vergil and Oscar Wilde alongside classics such as Chaucer, Chesterton, Eliot, Pasternak, and Claudel. The book is titled *O Holy Night! Masterworks of Christmas Poetry* and more information is available by calling 1-800-888-9344. Having given the book a plug, fully deserved, we feel free to snitch a sample. Not really snitch, of course, since John Donne has been in the public domain for somewhat over three centuries. The following is from his *La Corona*:

Salvation to all that will is nigh,
That All, which always is all everywhere,
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must beare,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,
Lo, faithful Virgin, yields himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb; and though he there
Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet he will wear
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.
Ere by the spheres time was created, thou
Wast in his mind, who is thy Son, and Brother,
Whom thou conceiv'st, conceiv'd; yea thou are now
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother,
Thou hast light in dark; and shutst in little room,
Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb.

■ Christmas cards come with all kinds of printed messages, banal and profound. Definitely in the latter category is last year's card from Father James Viall of Cleveland. The message, good for any time of year, is a reflection in old age by the great French writer Francois Mauriaç: "It is God alone, that you have carried away with you from that childhood. All the rest had to be abandoned, but not that presence indissolubly a part of your very being, so much a part that you doubt if it can possibly be found again after death. Rather, you almost cannot believe that He whom you will contemplate in the hereafter can resemble that Friend you have on earth; your eyes do not see Him, your hands do not touch Him, yet He walked beside you in the dark mornings on the damp pavement of the rue de Mirail where your school was, and He is still, today and forever, keeping step with you. Between that past and the present was a man's life, similar to all men's lives, woven of ambitions and desires. The river of the childhood paradise had disappeared underground, but now it has gushed up anew in the wilderness of your last days."

Sources: *New Republic* on the religious right, September 12, 1994. Nicholas von Hoffman on the "population bomb," *New York Observer*, September 12, 1994. Study on homosexual behavior cited in Associated Press report, September 6, 1994. Anne Applebaum on O. J. Simpson case, *Spectator*, July 30, 1994.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: Parody titles of hymns in *Christian Challenge*, September 1994. Robert Lichter on religion and the media, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hearing on religion, July 1, 1994. On murder of Christians by Muslims in Sudan, *National and International Religion Report*, September 19, 1994. *New York Post* on Clarence Thomas, September 19, 1994. Matthew Margo quoted on God and advertising, *New York Observer*, September 12, 1994. Gallup data on religion in the Western states from *emerging trends*, September 1994. "The Politics of the Breast" in *New York Times*, October 2, 1994. On President Clinton's pro-abortionist supporters, *New York Times*, August 3, 1994.

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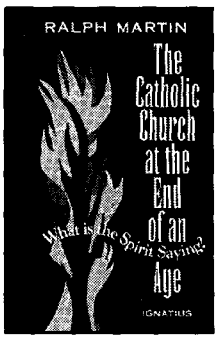

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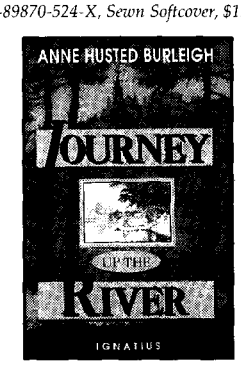

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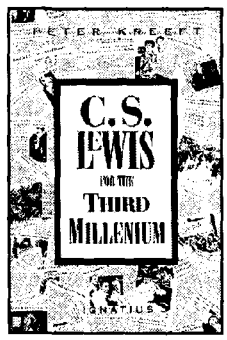

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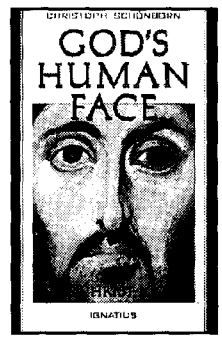

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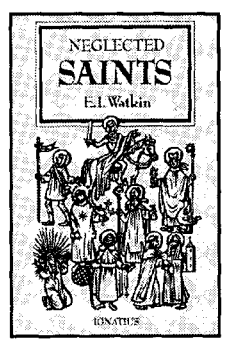

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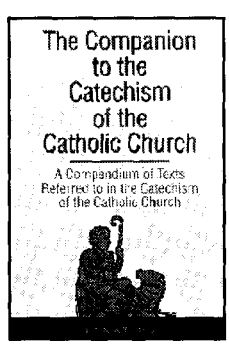
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